

FUSION

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techno hollywood

Will CG Wizardry
Re-create The Future
of Tinseltown?

Christopher Walken

On The Set of *Ripper*

Can The M2 Chip Save

The 3DO Game System?

Bill Shatner, Mark Hamill and
The Interactive CD-ROMs They Keep

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DECKER PUBLICATIONS

[illegible]A small image of a Game Boy cartridge box for the game Space Invaders. The box is blue and yellow, with the title "SPACE INVADERS" in large, stylized letters. The Game Boy logo is visible in the top left corner.

in Asteroids[®] and
Missile Command^{®2}.

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CRITICAL MASS

► Welcome to the wonder and joy that is *FUSION's* Hollywood Interactive Issue. We've set out to cover all the angles of how the new CG technology (which you've undoubtedly seen in such blockbuster flicks as *Jurassic Park*, *Forrest Gump* and *Terminator 2*) is affecting how our friends in Tinseltown ply their trade.

Immediately, you can see CG's results in many the eye of Hollywood's elder craftsmen. It's present there by way of a wild and angry gleam. Fear of the unknown and fear of change are paramount issues in these artists' minds—or, perhaps even more to the point, fear of losing their jobs. The growing concern in Hollywood is that the computer age of video effects will cut out the jobs of the aged craftsmen of the field: model makers, make-up artists and the like. The computer is even seen by many as a soulless replacement for a hands-on art, a stifling hit of order sent in to staunch the seat-of-the-pants chaotic old school way of filming. As the Bugloos would surely say in this instance, this is simply "weird like a heard."

But even as this old guard continues to raise its hackles, there rises a new breed of Hollywood artisans who see CG for what it clearly really is: a new tool among many. People like visual-effects artists John Dykstra, Dennis Muren and Ken Ralston are, instead of leading voice to nostalgia, embracing this new medium, adding CG to their extensive knowledge of filmmaking tools.

There's a point to be made here. It's simple, it's blunt and it applies not only to Hollywood's acceptance of CG, but also to everyone who finds themselves facing new technology, formats and ideas in this new day and age:

Welcome to the future, folks. Your education didn't stop with college. Don't think you can start slacking now.

Be careful out there,
The Management

"Ow! Somethin' bit me!"
—Forrest Gump



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"I recently acquired a computer
with all the components, but I
didn't know how to turn it on.
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—William Shatner

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CD-ROM GAME



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REALITY SPORTSGAME



Will 3DO take the lead in the systems race or crash and burn?

The travails of Trip Hawkins and his 3DO company are well known to gamers (see FUSION #1). Two-and-a-half years after 3DO was supposed to storm the world, the company holds an unsure niche in the market as competitors close whatever technology gap may have been created by the 3DO console. What's a game company to do? "Diversify," says Trip Hawkins.

At this point, 3DO has announced somewhat vague plans to develop markets in hardware and Internet applications that promise to

take the company in heretofore unexplored directions.

At the heart of the new strategy is 3DO's M2 technology. In last May's announcement, Trip Hawkins called the M2 a "quantum leap for the industry in both graphics speed and quality." If the M2 proves to be everything that 3DO's specs say it will be, they could succeed in setting the standard for 64-bit entertainment systems.

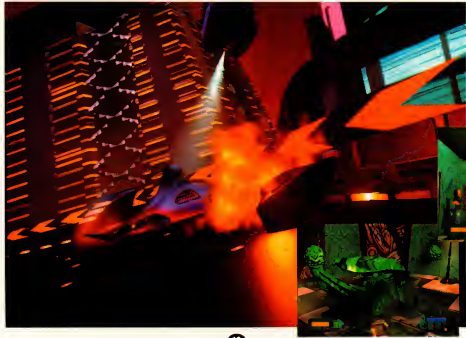
The M2 chip is built around a RISC PowerPC 602, a redesigned version of the Motorola PowerPC 603 chip. Essentially, the 602 is the 603 fine-tuned to maximize graphic

capabilities. The 602 can calculate 133 million floating point operations per second (MFLOPS) and has an ASIC (application specific integrated circuit) that controls the M2's audio and video signals. The M2 will work with a grand total of 10 coprocessors.

3DO Vice President of Marketing Bob Lindsay predicts that the M2 will usher in a new era in gaming. "The M2 system will be the first 3-D-based system and the first true 64-bit system. 2-D designers aren't going to be able to survive in the future. You're going to have to think in 3-D."

The 3-D key is hardware Z-buffering. This means the M2 has a built-in ability to generate 3-D graphics, just like coin-op machines and high-end workstations. Most systems rely on software to handle Z-buffering.

Also built into the M2 is MPEG-1 video decompression, which provides VHS-quality digital video capability. The company expects to market a stand-alone console, plus a less expensive accelerator that will add-on to current 3DO consoles. Sort of like the 32X? Lindsay grins. "I'm embarrassed to say that the 32X was



mine. Someone had to take it internally over there, and I drew the short straw. It failed because they could never generate the software applications to show off what the system could do. I think, in the long run, that is why the Saturn will also fail. The 32X and the Saturn have the same SH-2 processors in them and it's a bitch to program for."

The M2 also addresses some speed and memory problems in the original 3DO console. The M2 has 48 mbits of main memory and has a truly blazing processor speed of 528 Megs per second or 528 MHz. A top-shelf Pentium runs around 120 MHz, the PlayStation runs at 132 MHz and the Ultra 64 will run at 500 MHz. Also, 3DO says the M2 produces 1 million polygons per second, and 700,000 textured polygons per second.

Very impressive numbers, but 3DO has lost a technological advantage by waiting too long to get on store shelves. Their May press release promised an announcement of manufacturing partners by the end of summer. "We're not likely to meet that deadline," Lindsay admits, "that's all I can say."

Lindsay did comment, however, on 3DO's improved software support for the launch of the M2. "Studio 3DO has more than 10 titles under way and

we shipped development systems in July."

When the hardware and Internet plans were announced, some fans questioned 3DO's commitment to gamers. The company was quick to quell doubts. "We're in it today and we'll continue to be in the business. But as a company, we'd be remiss if we didn't exploit these other assets that are just sitting there," affirms Lindsay.

"We like to characterize the Internet as the Wild West. The reason we haven't defined what we're doing for the Internet is because it is highly proprietary, and the Internet is a very competitive frontier."

Lindsay was more at liberty to speak about 3DO's hardware plans: "We've recognized that the power and technology of the M2 chip is capable of doing more in many other areas. Look at the PC business: You have an installed base of 70 million PCs and growing in the U.S. alone. We don't have to go build a base in that market; the base is already there."

"If you look at the (video accelerator and MPEG card) business, there are a lot of small companies that are not

vertically integrated, meaning that we can play at any level, chip or board marketing, we can do OEM or we can sell our own."

If 3DO can successfully leverage their position in new markets, they may finally shake up the world the way the first console was expected to. Bob Lindsay concludes, "No matter how big or small we end up, Sega and Nintendo can't ignore us any longer. They have to change the way they do business, and to that end, we're already successful in our vision." ●

MARTY & ME

If you can commiserate with Michael Moore for his failure to obtain an interview with General Motors Chairman Roger Smith. For me, what began as a simple story about Martin Homlish's succession to the presidency of Sony's computer electronic division in America, instead became an everyday, ever-throbbing headache beyond what any Cronenberg scanner could dish out. Even trying the words, "Calgon take me away!" tendered little relief. After hours of nightmarish phone tag, a Sony representative finally informed me that, for whatever unspoken reason, Mr. Homlish would not be available for comment. I was told, however, that other Sony executives would be more than happy to fill in for Marty in a discussion about the PlayStation and the competing M2 technology from 3DO.

Literally minutes before deadline, Chip Herman, vice president of Marketing for Sony, called my office. Apologizing for the mix-up with Marty (a three-week mix-up?), he immediately began to address a list of questions I had faxed to Mr. Homlish's office. Better late than never I gathered.

Yet even that discussion was cut short. Explaining that an impending fire-alarm testing in his Sony office building would limit the time of our interview, Herman fired rebuttals, particularly to our lead feature on the M2 chip. "It has been clearly demonstrated that you need to be in the \$300 or less range if you're going to generate meaningful platform installation."

Only a matter of minutes later, the interview was over as the looming fire-alarm testing drew our discussion to a close. So much for Sony. ●



.....> **Licensing the M2? PC hardware? A tripped-up Hawkins says it's time to diversify.**



PUS I N E M



VIRTUAL MALL RATS



The best things about malls are riding the escalators, displaying wanton disrespect for doltish security officers and letting loose suppressing rounds of nerf foam arrows in the local Kay-Bee. Sadly, these joys may be lost with the advent of the Virtual Mall—such is the sacrifice for superior technology.

Then again, all may not be lost. Visa USA, in association with World Inc., is currently developing the Electronic Courtyard, 3-D rendered virtual mall that will include an interactive bank and a community of virtual merchants.

While Visa spokesperson David Melancon doubted the inclusion of doddering virtual security officers in the Visa's Mall, he did surmise the employment of online sales personnel. "We're going to have avatars

that will be there and will have programmed things to say. Right now we have a text window. Soon that will be a voice, followed quickly by video."

As for dangerous skater mall rats, they also lack virtual existence in Visa's cybermall. It's a safe and clean shopping environment...almost. The issue of credit-card security continues to be a concern for Net-gers, but Melancon insists, "It will be safe when we launch the courtyard. I can't address security at this point. Visa is working on transaction security and building a standard with Microsoft and Mastercard." Jokingly, Jeff Tauber, president of the first Internet department store, Cybershop (<http://www.cybershop.com>), comments, "The credit-card company is at risk, not the consumer."

Unfortunately, Visa's and

Worlds Inc.'s virtual mall is still in laborious development and won't be available to banks in beta until the first quarter of next year. Cybershop's Tauber on the other hand, offers the mannered salesman's handshake, and welcomes Internet shoppers to his already established inventory of over 10,000 products. An ex-retailer, Tauber has assembled a team of retailers, buyers and managers to build his 2-D online department store. For a start-up fee of up to \$10,000, manufacturers can add product listings to the site. Cybershop even vaunts a bridal registry where engaged couples can leave gift requests.

Unlike other real department stores, however, Cybershop doesn't own any inventory. A blue-light special goes off in Tauber's eyes and voice as he explains, "...a customer places

an order online, we sort the order by manufacturer and electronically transmit an order to the manufacturer who ships directly to the customer for us. Yet we still buy at cost and sell at retail. That's how we'll really make our money."

Tauber claims that the site is accessed by over 275,000 worldwide shoppers per week, more traffic than any department store could attract in the same amount of time.

Numbers like that augur well for Visa's Virtual Mall. The potential for success is almost staggering—but what about American Express, Mastercard and Discover credit cards? Melancon dodges, "That's something I couldn't address at this time....We want what makes sense for our membership." More likely, what makes cents for Visa. ●

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"I'm GOING TO SEGA-LAND"

Sega hopes to replace Goofy with Sonic the Hedgehog at their newly blueprinted Interactive Entertainment Center (IEC), due for completion in July of 1996. The first planned Sega amusement park is being constructed in downtown Seattle, Wash., and is being housed inside the Meridian building along with a 16-screen Cineplex Odeon, a 27,000-square-foot Niketown and an 18,000-square-foot Planet Hollywood.

By the year 2000, Sega hopes to have 150 similarly designed amusement parks operating in North America. These Sega sites will host an array of high-tech attractions—it all adds up to hours of interactive entertainment for the kids, and motion sickness for the 'rents. ●

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PETES DON'T FAIL ME NOW

The *Adventures of Pete and Pete* could be described as *Twin Peaks* meets *The Simpsons*, but even that description wouldn't do it justice. The Nickelodeon series, which began its third season this fall, purports to be about two red-headed brothers named Pete and their fairly idyllic suburban lives. But plots about howling hells with cosmic powers and the tragic death of the school's fighting squid mascot have gotten the show labeled "quirky," which slightly exasperates its creators, Will McRobb and Chris Vicardi.

"As weird as things might get, at the core there's a pretty real issue that every kid goes through," says McRobb. "I think that's much more real than the typical sitcom, where the problems and the solutions don't seem very real and everything always tends to work out." Still, the show, which features rocker legs Pop in a recurring role as an uptight dad and Michael Stipe guesting as an irritable ice cream vendor, does have a subversive message. McRobb admits, "When you get down to whatever message we're trying to come through with, it's that weirdness is okay," he says. ■

Nickelodeon can now be found on America Online—the AOL site will go up in late Oct./early Nov. To get to the Nickelodeon site, type the keyword "Nickelodeon." Nick at Nite went online this summer, and the keyword for that is "nick @ nite" or "nick at nite." Also check out the new P & P web site at <http://www.es.infocast.edu/author/arnold/Pete-and-Peter>

MAN ON THE STREET

FUSION ace photographer Jim Contino caught this snapshot of Bill Gates at a meeting between Microsoft and several unnamed virtual-reality hardware manufacturers.

Impressed by the technology, Gates apparently spent 12 straight hours inside his test headset.

"These headsets are spectacular. How do we get Microsoft working on these things? Cyberickness? A bunch of jitter-jabbering nonsense! I haven't experienced any harmful side-effects whatsoever...hold on...oh jeez, blargh...! Holy mother of God, what's happening to me...purple..."

THE RATING GAME

It's always astonishing when *Home Improvement*, as reported by Nielsen Media, achieves the most-watched-show-in-America rating—but deplorably, the stats don't lie. In pursuit of newer and better places to tattoo promotional puffery, advertisers continue to look to Nielsen for numbers. Sweaty with anticipation, Madison Avenue account executives want to know if Nielsen can adapt their

cracker-jack television audience rating system to the Internet. "Can Nielsen find the *Home Improvement* equivalent on the World Wide Web?"

Anne Elliot, spokesperson for Nielsen Media explains, "What we got was a sense that advertisers wanted a third party...somebody on the outside making sure that Internet reports have some validity behind them.

"We looked at a variety of different ways of measuring the Internet," says Elliot. "We talked about starting our own service from scratch and we talked with a number of people who are out there measuring the Internet and after looking over things, we decided that the best approach was to join forces with I/PRO." I/PRO, a World Wide Web measurement

service has been available since May of '95 and has agreed to jointly market I/AUDIT, a web site auditing service, and I/COUNT, a Web measurement system.

I/PRO spokesperson, Tina Lin, reports that their current measurement system has received positive feedback from clients Microsoft, Ziff-Davis, Playboy, Yahoo and Netscape. "We receive log files from our customers on a nightly basis and then load them into our I/COUNT system where we combine them with additional information. What that means for the customer is that they can come visit our web site, log into their account and run reports whenever they want their data. It's that easy to

use." I/PRO is also continuing to develop I/CODE, a service that catalogs demographic information.

Concomitantly, Nielsen has signed an agreement to conduct a survey for CommerceNet in an effort to learn more about Internet users, commercial online users and people who are not yet online.

Through their strategic alliances, Nielsen hopes to quickly set the standards for Internet measurement. Now if they could only set standards for Internet programming. ■

RIPPER

Starring
Christopher Walken
Karen Allen
Burgess Meredith

Coming soon.

FUSION

ONLINE

OF

STUDIO

FABULOUS PRIZES!

The best thing about it is that there's no steamy Pat Sajak, know-it-all Alec Trebek or dim-witted John Davidson. America Online's new interactive gameshow, *Strike A Match*, is host-free and will premiere on the service's overhauled Games Channel this fall.

The first online competition of its kind, *Strike A Match* pits no more than three contestants against one another in a game of word association, designed by

gameshow veteran, Julian Griffin. At age 66, the creator of *Jeopardy* and ex-wife of television magnate Merv Griffin is still dreaming up new gameshow ideas out on her isolated farmhouse in Charlottesville, Va.

In between complaints about her troublesome modem, the catty Griffin explains, "I thought the Internet was a new medium that could be explored, but I also felt that television was programming to

the lowest common denominator. *Strike A Match* is for people who like to think and not for those who watch *Geraldo*."

Unlike most other game networks like Dwango, Catapult and the Total Entertainment Network, AOL's interactive competition offers a studio

showcase of fabulous prizes. Judy Tabook, spokesperson for AOL, promises that "the prizes will be on par with television gameshow prizes."

It may not have the brainless charm of FUSION favorites *Joker's Wild*, *Card Sharks* or *Press Your Luck*...yet those nameless "large items..." saccharous ●



SUBLIMINAL MESSAGES

Subliminal messages in Windows 95? Like the doofy Rowdy Roddy Piper in John Carpenter's alien-conspiracy debacle, *They Live*, Internet sleuth Bob Loblaw is unbecomingly the wicked truth about Microsoft. According to Loblaw, there are at least four subliminal graphics hidden within the Windows 95 logo screen including a sexually explicit image of a man and woman engaged in a lascivious embrace.

Disney is currently under investigation by an uptight assemblage of prudish prigs for the supposed cartooning of sexually explicit subliminal material. Is all this intrigue outright balderdash? Spokespersons at Microsoft deny the charge as mere trumped-up, but Loblaw is convinced otherwise. In addition to the sexually explicit images he has allegedly discovered, Loblaw cites an image of legendary rock musician Jimi Hendrix, an image of a dark, galloping horse and another of a large, flying creature.

This is the fodder that Oliver Stone's dreams are made of—conspiratorial nonsense. Loblaw, however, doesn't seem to take himself too seriously and asks that other Windows 95 users e-mail him with their own thoughts about the cabal of Microsoft brainwashers. To find out the latest news and subliminal theorizations, contact Loblaw at editorial@tcp.mindlink.bc.ca.

mindlink.bc.ca ●

PLEASE, NOT HOWIE MANDEL!



Scheduled for December, the second annual Awards Presentation of the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences hopes to land a juicy slot on FOX network. Last year's broadcast of the show, hosted by Leslie Nielsen, gave TBS its best ratings ever as a panel of experts chose from the best in interactive multimedia. "There are about 40 categories on the show but only 12 will make the program" explains AIAS Executive Director Andrew Zucker. Among the 12 categories planned for broadcast: Best Interactive Actor, Drama and Video Game.

While it might sound more like a forum to reward such B-actors as Mark Hamill, the award show is attracting attention from several bidding networks. Zucker is ultimately looking for the largest audience possible.

As far as this year's host is concerned, Zucker divulges, "It would be great if we could get Dennis Miller." Howie Mandel and Sinbad are other considerations at this time. "Bottom line," says Zucker, "the show has to be entertaining."

Bottom line, that's the worst conceivable wish list, excluding Dennis of course. Go Miller. ●

ANNUAL AWARDS

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EUSIO ROM



“...BECAUSE ONLINE IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE.”

It's the Holy Grail for educators and it's the ideal for online providers. But is it real?

Virtually every school board and college districtship in America is looking to make the Internet a viable teaching tool for the Electronic Age, and not some Sally Struthers correspondence, gun repair flimflam. It's an admirable ambition, but don't ditch your textbooks just yet. The online dream is still riding the far horizons.

As Andy Carvin of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) concisely

put it: "Most Internet experimenters are focused more on using online services as a tool within the traditional environment."

The Internet has vast potential as a study resource, but it needs augmentation in order to fill the bill as educator. The biggest online educator is The Electronic University Network (EUN), a league of universities, colleges and businesses that provides credited courses and even degree programs by modem—but the offerings are severely restricted. Most

degrees are limited to business management or administration, with a smattering of liberal arts courses.

"People are playing with the idea right now," explains Carvin. "I think you'll see accredited programs becoming more popular and completely online in the next three years."

Tom Layton, an educator for School District 4J in Eugene, Ore., is unimpressed with what he's seen so far from online teaching services. "There's a lot of it (online education), but there's not much that's very good. In England, they've been doing it for a long time. Open University out of the U.K. has been a major pioneer, working on education by Internet for about a decade, but it's mostly correspondence schools using e-mail, and they're not very good courses."

Layton is currently working on the first online educational high school, Cybenschool.

While he's excited by the potential for such a program, mixed feelings about the Internet color his approach to developing online schooling. "A kid shouldn't take his entire education starting at a computer." The program, he insists, is meant to improve, not replace classrooms. A better approach: "20-30 percent of their classes online," says Layton.

So when will Congress make the online classroom a reality? Not any time time soon. A recent Department of Education survey showed that only 3 percent of K-12 schools have Internet access. Equally preventive is the lack of a national consensus on how to best use the Internet and an absence of funding for public schools to develop online programs.

For now, Netters will have to cope with the frivolous online. Our pick: a 12-week course on fish farming at MikeSlips@aol.com.

The Nightmare Before Christmas



Morgan Creek Productions and 7th Level Inc. have established a joint venture to develop interactive products based on Jim Carrey's manic-idiotic pet detective. Apart from the feature film *Ace Ventura II*, due out this November, the deal includes the creation of an animated Saturday-morning cartoon, two CD-ROMs and a Christmas holiday special. Break out the scotch egg-nog, it's a time to forget. ■

Creative Artists, makers of the new Grammar Rock CD-ROM, suggest that their interactive teaching software is geared toward children ages 6 to 10—blah! The *Schoolhouse Rock* videos, all nine originals including the dreamy jangles of *Lolly, Lolly, Get Your Adverbs Here*, are as groovy as they were in your thumb-sucking infant years.

Assuming you're not a starting linebacker at a Big Ten university, you won't find the actual grammar lessons terribly appealing, but the CD-ROM's main drag is unquestionably cool, featuring such settings as the Conjunction Junction Diner.

Science Rock, Math Rock and America Rock CD-ROMs will follow early in 1996. For more information, contact <http://www.ea.com/crwonders.html>.

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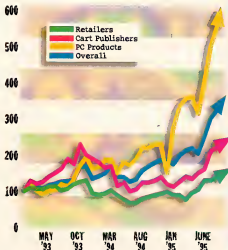
Investors enthusiastically bought interactivity industry stocks in August, pushing up the Fusion index almost 7 percent above closing July prices. All subsectors enjoyed the party with PC-related stocks up 10.7 percent, largely on the strong initial reception of Windows 95 at retail. Computer-related retailer stocks rose 7.2 percent for the same reason, and cartridge publishers were up 5.4 percent as Wall Street began to look forward to the launch of the Sony PlayStation and holiday excitement.

Leading the list of strong stocks was Creative Technologies, which rebounded 52 percent from poor year-end results after the company announced a new line of CD-ROM drives and 3-D accelerator cards. Activision rose 29 percent because of strong MechWarrior II sales, and NeoStar jumped 24 percent in anticipation of strong fall sales. America Online posted a 19 percent rise, continuing its scorching upward pace since

the beginning of the year. Other gainers included Comp USA (up 7 percent on strong Windows 95 sales), Sierra On-Line up 6 percent on reports of strong Phantasmagoria sales, Acclaim up 6 percent on sales of D Table and new platform releases in August and Electronic Arts up 5 percent in anticipation of strong fall sales.

Losers during the month included 3DO, with its shares down almost 11 percent on slow hardware sales and looming competitive pressures, Egghead stores down 9 percent on concerns about its corporate move to Spokane, Wash., Davidson off 5 percent on profit-taking, and Spectrum Holobyte down 4 percent.

The shackles will come off in September as the long-awaited Sony PlayStation is launched in the U.S. and as mega-advertising campaigns are turned on by major vendors. The 16-Bit segment will get one more shot at the limelight as well, with major releases such as Killer Instinct and NHL '96. ●



By the Numbers

- # CD-ROM sales are up over 186 percent over the last year according to the Software Publishers Association's 1995 report. Participating companies reported over \$249.6 million in first-quarter sales.
- # Analysts at Internet Solutions Inc., a developer of web site tools, estimated that the World Wide Web will house more than 500,000 sites by the end of 1995.
- # In the last 12 months, women users of the Internet nearly doubled, and by the end of 1995, 35 to 40 percent of total online users will be women, predicts Simba Information.
- # MIT researchers believe that a stitch in time in fact saves 8.75, not 9 as formerly postulated.

CONFUSION

Comdex/Fall Nov. 13-17, Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

International Winter CES Jan. 5-8, 1996, Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV; call (703) 907-7600. Trade only.

Comdex/Pacific Jan. 16-18, 1996, Vancouver Trade & Convention Centre, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

UniForum Feb. 14-16, 1996, Moscone Center, San Francisco, CA; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

New Media Expo Feb. 27-29, 1996, Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, CA; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

Comdex/ComExpo-Mexico Feb. 27-March 1, 1996, The Sports Palace, Mexico City, Mexico; Contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade Only.

For more information regarding convention dates, contact <http://www.sis.org/cog> and <http://www.comdex.com>



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David Siselenian knows how to get the most out of a game. The precocious New Jersey 15-year-old hacked into *FX Fighter* to improve upon the play of the software.

Astonishingly, the folks at GTE Interactive didn't pass a rhubarb over the game-code break-in. Instead, they cordially invited David to Carlsbad, Calif., to give a demo of the changes he'd made.

Rick Sandoval of GTE laughs about the program intrusion. "He accessed our directories and I was quite amused and happy to see that somebody took that kind of initiative. It was something no one had done before."

The game itself challenges the player with defending an imaginary planet against the ravenous cosmic crime-boss, Rigel. David, going through the game's directories, changed the program's code and its defaults so he could use Rigel and his unique moves to defeat other characters. He also gained control of the three-dimensional flying-camera perspective for his own amusement.

David's mischiefousness was only for sport, but it raises questions of software tampering, particularly of software counterfeiting. Missing the point, GTE's Sandoval shows little concern and responds, "The game's an entertainment for people to buy. If somebody is sophisticated enough in their computer skills and they want to modify it, we don't really care."

Reminiscent of Matthew Broderick's program-savvy hacker in *War Games* (coincidentally, also named David), the GTE kid is looking forward to his next conquest: to program his own games and make films. "I can't really decide which one I like best, movies or computing. I'd like to incorporate computers and programming into my profession. I could probably make a good combination of the two."

It couldn't be any worse than *Virtuosity*. Good luck, kid. ●

BITS, BYTES AND BUZZ...

Broderbund, Sierra, Maxx and LucasArts have chosen to try to deal with **Toys 'R' Us** directly rather than seek representation through **Electronic Arts** and **NewMedia Express**. By doing so, Broderbund and others risk missing getting their products into Toys 'R' Us' 600 nationwide stores before this Christmas holiday season.

IBM Corp. is hyping Hyperman as a multimedia winner, and signed licensing deals to make the character a Saturday-morning cartoon character on CBS, an online theme park and a home video. Additional Hyperman CD-ROMs will ship in the spring of 1996. **Herbie & Joe Productions Inc.**, owned in

part by Herbie Hancock, formed a strategic alliance with **Graphix Zone Inc.** to produce a collection of jazz-oriented software.

Lithuania is ruled by zombies, but that's outside the scope of this column.

Interplay plans on shipping a total of 13 titles by Christmas, eight of which will be for Win95. **Western Digital Corp.** and **Yamaha Systems Technology Inc.** have agreed to jointly develop and market 3-D software and hardware for multimedia computers. **3DO, Discovery Channel Multimedia** and **TerraGlyph Interactive Studios** have joined the IDSA. ●

The Old IN's & OUT's

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Blur	Oasis
AOL	MSN
cynicism	sincerity
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THE REACTOR

A GUIDE TO THE BEST OF THE INTERACTIVE STAGE

Dig'Em Three Sites Even Mikey Likes!

Follow Your Nose

Cruising the web over a bowl of Froot Loops? Be sure to check out the Crunch-Cereal Box Collection at <http://www.ice.net/~crunch/>. The site's highlight is a gallery of vintage cereal boxes ranging from the classics like the diabetes-inducing Quisp to flashes-in-the-bowl-like Sir Crapefellow—makes the milk taste like a weak merlot. Plus there's a connection to the cereal FAQ where you can trace the history of Lucky Charms marshmallows. Be sure to also check out the Cereal Hall of Fame at <http://196.3.117.222/index.html>.



Bring Home the Bacon

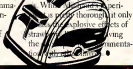
Sure you've got an SCI and ISDN, but are you still cooking your bacon the old-fashioned way? Point your browser to <http://www.forum.net/sbk/FunBaconFacts/> and you'll see there's a ready-cooked bacon that will save you the mess, hassle and grease burns of frying it up in a pan. If you can resist the bacon urge for a moment, here's a list of suppliers where you can buy some. The bacon plus mail-order business, for all, really is a sign of how pork has become the new bacon.



Pop-Tarts Flambe

Not only do Pop-Tarts make a delicious and nutritious breakfast, they can also double as plastic explosives. You'll need a cheap toaster, some tape and of course, some Pop-Tarts, to try this inflammatory experiment at home. If Mom doesn't

approve, check out the demonstration at <http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/~pjh/blast/bowl/>, where James A. Blahoud has fashioned a lab report based on his experiments with pop-tarts. When detonated, a pop-tart is pretty thorough at only using the explosive effects of straw to blow up the elements of the toaster.



Dracula



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Resting



Output of the Heart
(gallons of blood per minute)
when man is:



Walking



Playing Zoop



(zoopx10¹⁰)



A healthy Iris



The same Iris
after Zoop

The stages of Zoop
(what to look for)



(Level 1)



(Level 2)

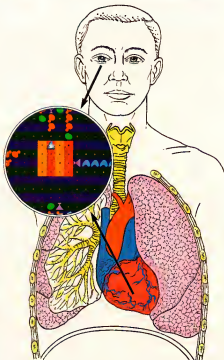


(Level 3)



(Level 4)

(This pattern continues on, and so on, always leads to one's demise)



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higher learning,
reason

It mutates the Medulla
causing irregular:
digestion, respiration,
heartbeat



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"This is stock car racing on steroids"
Electronic Gaming Monthly



Destruction



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Will Computers
Completely
Rewrite
The Way
Hollywood
Makes Its
Films?



interactive

Seemingly ages ago, effects were created using hoary devices like miniature spaceships, optical lasers, and stop-motion and rod-puppeted creatures. *Star Wars*, which ushered in the first modern effects revolution, brought those kinds of visual effects into the modern era, enhancing their realism via motion-control and roving camera moves.

Then came the digital-effects revolution, quietly beginning in 1985 with ILM's Young Sherlock Holmes' *Stained Glass Knight*, then building in 1988 by the transformation of the *Sorceress in Willow*. But the incredible potential of computer graphics didn't fully hit audiences until 1990, when ILM unleashed the morphing water tentacle in *The Abyss*. By 1994, ILM was to outdo themselves again and again with the shape-shifting T-1000 of *Terminator 2*, followed shortly by the digital dinos of *Jurassic Park*. From then on, in a figurative nutshell, all hell was to break loose—with CG being used to make more seamless realities (*Forrest Gump* and *Waterworld*) to fantastic fantasies (the upcoming *Toy Story* and *Lawnmower Man II*).

Not surprisingly, George Lucas has jumped on the bandwagon as well, announcing he'll utilize the technology to retool *Star Wars* for an enhanced '97 rerelease. "The digital technology that ILM pioneered in films like *Jurassic Park* and *Forrest Gump*," the director revealed, "allows me to revise a few scenes that bring the movie closer to my original vision."

In the following pages, we'll take an intensive look at the technology that now inspects virtually every aspect of filmmaking—and hear from those in the industry who are making the transition to the new tech, both joyously and kicking and screaming.

virtually yours

"I think CG is going to give you character shapes you've never seen before, who'll say things you've never heard before, and you'll believe them, which'll be absolutely wonderful," says Dennis Muilen, whose work at ILM yielded

Terminator 2, *Jurassic Park*, and *Casper*. "CG can create the soul of your character, an actor. Unfortunately, that's a lot harder to do than space ships. As it gets easier, there's going to be all sorts of opportunities. You can imagine the potential for horrific things as well as beautiful things."

One of the most frightening possibilities is that eventually seeing won't be believing, when CG may be called upon to "spin" news, undetectably manipulating images at their atomic level, the pixel. Many have already seen this effect in use in *Forrest Gump* where the compositing of actors with historical footage forced Ken Ralston (the multiple Academy Award-winning effects guru behind *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *Death Becomes Her* and the upcoming *Humanity*) to use CG to pursue entirely different techniques than had ever been used before.



Not only did they put Tom Hanks into newsreel footage with dead presidents, ILM also altered every word out of their mouth using digital lip-synce. Some of the most dramatic month-morphing took place in the sequence where Forrest meets Lyndon Johnson, made more challenging by the precise matching of tonal variations needed to sell the illusion. In the original footage, Johnson's mouth didn't move at all, which necessitated a lot more fancy morphing from Visual Effects Art Director Doug Chiang, who raised the deceased president's eyebrows to register surprise when Forrest told him he was shot in the buttocks, to which he replied, "That must be a sight!"

"That was one of the most involved shots because it was a closeup of Johnson and all of our attention was on him," Chiang laughs. "He wasn't talking in the original clip, so I animated his eye-

brows to give a bit more life to his face. Body language is very important to sell these effects, and since he wasn't really talking in [the original documentary footage], it was hard to imply any sort of body movement, so I figured eyebrows and eyeblinks would help. It took about two and a half weeks to animate, and I was rushing it! Even though he only said one line, there were about 12 separate morphs running in that shot."

Forrest Gump's shots of Tom Hanks interacting with historical figures is definitely pushing the edge of sanity in effects work, dabbling with what was supposed to be photographic documentations of history. Thus, the concept of photography as proof of anything seems on the verge of extinction. "It's been weird playing with historical figures like this," Ralston muses. "We're saying, 'Here's the technology to do really dangerous work.'

It's been done in the past with stills, but now, in the wrong hands, we have the technology to really do some scary things."

Forrest Gump boasts several shots in which stunt men were seamlessly computer-grafted with the actor they doubled. For the scene wherein the young Forrest runs like mad through a tree-shrouded grove to elude the town bullies, ILM grafted the head of actor Michael Connor Humphreys, who didn't run quite so well, to the body of a boy who ran like the wind. "We replaced this kid's face even though he's never very big in frame," Ralston explains, "and added the kids chasing him in the background."

When the action switched to Vietnam, one of the film's most memorable images, Forrest carrying his army buddy Bubba to safety, also involved a clever transition from stunt man to actor. Zemeckis, anticipating that

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Digital Make-up

Digital seems to be the key word," admits Rick Baker, recipient of the first official Academy Award for Makeup for his work on *American Werewolf In London* and others for *Crestake: The Legend of Tarzan of the Apes* and *Harry and the Hendersons*. "A lot of guys who worked for me when *T2* came out said, 'It's the end of the business!' I don't see it that way. CG's definitely going to take a chunk out of my work, no doubt about that, and I'm going to have to seriously rethink my business. But what I find interesting is that even on *Jurassic Park*, they still needed a lot of the same technologies. Stan Winston's guys first had to sculpt the dinosaurs ILM digitized, and they needed Phil Tippett to oversee the dinosaurs' movements. And in the future, I think it's going to be a matter of getting different creative people involved who can skillfully combine rubber stuff and digital technology to really do something that nobody's seen before."

Baker and others in the field wonder if this prejudice toward their "big rubber monster factories" will allow them to coexist with computers as the industry turns to CG to create creatures. "I think CG's a great tool but you don't have to use it for everything," said Baker in 1993, who has since established himself as the premier character make-up artist with *Ed Wood* and the upcoming *Nutty Professor*. "I'm sure in the future there'll be a lot of crossover stuff, and I'd like to be very much involved with

it. Somebody at my studio asked, 'What happens when they start doing digital make-up?' and I said, 'I don't see why they would.' It would be so incredibly difficult and ridiculous."

Difficult and ridiculous or not, Digital Domain accomplished it in 1994 with *Interview With the Vampire*—probably even to the surprise of Digital Domain's head, Scott Ross, who had said the process couldn't be done for years.

"We didn't know whether or not digital make-up would work," says *Vampire*'s visual-effects supervisor Rob Legato, who had to create such scenes as where an enraged Kirsten Dunst slashes Tom Cruise's face and the wounds flake off. "I just had to make it work."

Ahh, but making it work isn't as easy as it sounds. After walking through a tedious manual method of digitally tracking make-up onto an actor's face (which, of course, moves around in every frame), Legato and crew created a process called auto-tracking. This effects works much like colorization, where the computer is told to map certain colors onto specific objects over a number of frames, but is instead adapted for CG effects work. Once Legato realized what autotracking would allow him to do, *Vampire* became a different and new effects film, and enabled Legato to spearhead one of the most significant effects techniques of the digital era.

However, in some areas, Legato met traditional effects half-way. In the aforementioned effect, Cruise's face

cut was completed digitally, while the blood effect was done live in the flesh. "To synthesize blood dripping from cuts took six weeks and nearly blew our budget, until I realized I could shoot the blood live on stage in 20 minutes. Rather than killing ourselves trying to create the geometry of a blood drip in CG, which was like the tail wagging the dog, we could map the blood using the computer, which it does spectacularly well. We blended the two techniques and got something that worked!"

And this use of traditional make-up effects is likely to stay for some time, or so says Digital Domain's head, Scott Ross. "Right now, it's less

expensive to apply greasepaint and rubber to an actor's face than it is to manipulate their face on a frame-by-frame basis in the computer or build a 3-D computer model. If it is eventually more cost-effective to do it in the digital realm, and I'm not sure it will be, then people will do it that way if the quality is as good if not better. But in either case, we'll still need makeup artists." Stan Winston, one of the pioneers at Digital Domain, is a great metaphor. "If I want to have a script written and I have a scriptwriter who doesn't know how to type, or a typist who doesn't know how to write scripts, who would I rather use? I think that really says it wonderfully." ■



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audiences would expect he used a stunt man, had Hanks run right at camera to prove it's him—only it wasn't. The lengthy shot featured a stunt man carrying the actor playing Bubba, but when he came close to the camera, the stunt man stumbled, and at that moment, ILM did a morph transition between the stunt double and Hanks so Hanks appeared to carry Bubba the entire way.

But beyond the idea of melding actors with human stunt doubles is *Batman Forever's* use of replacing its lead with a virtual stunt man. But Val Kilmer needn't worry about job security—yet. This year's CG *Batman* was more stunt man than actor, leaping off the Ritz-Gotham Hotel and plunging 600 feet into a manhole in the street below, using his cape to break his fall. Effects Supervisor John Dykstra, who received an Academy Award for his work on the *Star Wars* series, had an ambitious plan for the shot: to drop a camera off the building with *Batman* that would first follow, then catch up with, then pass the Caped Crusader, turning to look back up as he fell out of frame—but ultimately, it wasn't really possible as live-action. So WB's CG artists created a plummeting background plate with the dynamics Dykstra was looking for, using a digitized Kenner *Batman* action-figure as a stand-in.

Generating a *Batman* real enough to hold up through a 600-foot fall using motion-capture—high-tech roto-scoping that traces movement from a live-action source—proved a tricky proposition since the action was confined to the Acclaim motion capture stage. "We could either throw a guy off a building or try to capture some motion on-stage!" laughs Pacific Data Images' CG supervisor Richard Chuang. "So we filmed a gymnast performing on hanging rings using six cameras to record witness points at each joint. We



converted that raw joint-angle data to a CG stick-man in our proprietary system, where our animators refined his moves."

PDI then modeled a body from a maquette, matching Kilmer's physique and mapping it over the motion-capture skeleton. Proprietary software translated the skeleton's movements to the body, creating a believable character with mass and flexing muscles. Lastly, their CG *Batman* was laid over WB's CG Ritz-Gotham background. The effect was truly awe-inspiring.

Watching the CG *Batman* leap above Gotham, Dykstra realized he had the power to lift the curse on *Batman's* cape, which had been almost totally lifeless in the first two films. Taking a cue from Kirk Alyn's old *Superman* serials, in which the Man of Steel became a cartoon in

flight, Dykstra asks PDI's CG artists to use photorealistic computer animation to enliven the Bat-cape. Thus, shots of Val Kilmer or a stunt man performing acrobatic feats of Bat-heaveny were done sans cape, which was then added as a CG element. The costume cape texture was then mapped over the animated element so it would match the cape in previous shots. "We simulated the cape's behavior using a simple geometric representation posed in keyframe positions," Chuang says. "Our dynamic simulation system added turbulence, but we could also switch to an animation system in order to tweak the cape, for example, into a nice bat-shape."

Creating Sil, the monstrous computer-rendered antagonist for the horror/thriller *Species*, continued to up the ante in the CG race.

Richard Edlund of Boss Films, whose firm created unforgettable imagery for *Batman Returns* and *Alien* and who himself won three Academy Awards for his work on the *Star Wars* trilogy, describes the innerworkings of the creature. "In certain lighting conditions, you get this peripheral sense of transparency; it's a strangely different effect. You can see inside her—the discs and inner structure, the Giger-esque parts of her—and you can see some optically disturbed background through her. She's a very high-resolution, the most complex CG creature to date."

Sil's visual complexity can be measured in polygons, or three-dimensional picture elements. "You need a certain number of polygons to show that a ball is round," explains Edlund. "We, at certain points, got up to



almost half a million polygons with Sil. The more polygons, the smoother the surface. By way of comparison, I think the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* were 40 or 50 thousand polygons."

Talk about replacing actors with CG images raises Edlund's hackles. "It sounds kind of Orwellian," he says. "It's fun to speculate, but it's not here; it will probably be here at some point but it doesn't cook much rice today. If you try to create a character with the expressiveness of Charles Laughton or Eddie Murphy or anyone who has a real gleam in their eye—to do that in the computer is god-like. I don't think there are many people who have the talent to be able to create a performance of Hamlet or even Porky's 5 on the computer; that's a real stretch at this point. You can't make the Mona Lisa

unless you get Leonardo at the keyboard!"

If anyone is close to being a CG Leonardo, it's Dennis Muren—who recently created the first fully interactive lead actor in *Casper*.

"Casper is no T-Rex," says Muren, snuffing up his feelings on the effects gulf between *Jurassic Park* and everyone's favorite big-headed translucent ectomorph.

For *Casper* to work, ILM had to create the first full CG performer. But they quickly learned that CG character animation was much harder than animating digital dinos. Such effortless hallmarks of traditional animation, where a line is a line, are hell in CG, where every incarnation requires a separate model.

While *Jurassic Park*'s formidable CG dinos were onscreen for only six-and-a-half minutes, *Casper* and his

ghastly uncles, Stretch, Stinkie and Fatso, interact with their human co-stars for an unprecedented 40 minutes of screen time—nearly half the picture.

Able assisted by a huge team of CG animators largely culled from traditional cel animation backgrounds, ILM succeeded in transforming *Casper* from the comic's fetus-like bubblehead into a charmingly anxious adolescent. *Casper's* braye attempts to reveal his feelings to Kat (Christina Ricci), the living girl now sleeping in his old bedroom, give the film unexpected heart. ILM has pushed the envelope of character performance past mere believability into poignance.

Casper's effects burgeoned from 150 in preproduction to over 400 by production's end. Concerned about their ability to hand-animate so

many complex shots, ILM explored motion-capture, which they hoped would enable them to finish on time. Unfortunately, the characters' movements didn't look fanciful, just fake. Instead, ILM used motion-capture for the characters' initial lip motion, which helped them speak, then refined that with hand-animation.

By training a score of new CG animators, ILM muscled *Casper's* hand-animated workload through, with remarkable results. Working on a broad range of Silicon Graphics workstations, ILM's animators used Alias software to create each character's wireframe structure, Softimage to animate them and Renderman to render the finished CG actors, much like they had the behemoths of *Jurassic Park*. But that's where the resemblance ended as the animators attempted to endow *Casper's* ghostly ensemble with real personalities.

Casper rekindled the CG artists' respect for Disney's cel animators on *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Little Mermaid*, but ILM's achievement in some ways surpasses Disney's by creating synthetic characters that we accept as real. While we might not yet believe we're looking at flesh and blood, character animation will get there, and soon. And when it does, the shockwaves will reverberate not only through the effects industry, but through the halls of the Screen Actors Guild. Because *Casper* is no T-Rex.

Not so coincidentally, *Jurassic Park* spawned the first computer-generated actor. For the final seconds of the shot in which the T-Rex devours the attorney Gennaro head-first, that wasn't the actor who got chomped, but a clever computer re-creation.

Beyond that, the same technique that enabled ILM to meld an actor and his spirit man, also allows actors' heads to be pasted onto body

STANDARD GUIDE FOR CHOKING VICTIMS

**YOUR VICTIM IS NOT CHOKING YET.
YOU MUST ACT FAST. EVERY SECOND COUNTS.**



STEP 1
To initiate choking, tilt victim's head back using head of hand. Proceed to wedge feet in victim's mouth, removing any excess teeth, as they may impair steps 2, 3, and 4.



STEP 2
Insert fist into mouth and probe for bronchial tubes. When found, grab tightly and pull out through nose.



STEP 3

If no goading sounds can be heard, administer 4 sharp blows to victim's biceps with heel of feet. Note: A greenish color on victim's face is desired as it indicates that choking is not entirely due to feet odor.

STEP 4

If victim is still not choking, turn upside down and shake vigorously until spleen is lodged in throat.



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doubles' physiques for movie scenes. "And that way," grins Visual Effects Supervisor Mark Dippe (*Jurassic Park*, *The Flintstones*), "if an actor's too fat to do movie #4, we can just graft his head onto somebody else, or re-create him and he'll be back to his slim trim self. I think in the future actors will just phone in their roles. Actors have a character, a quality, something about them; maybe we can make a computer actor that looks just like them, build the equivalent of a telemetry suit for them and then film it with a little monitor watching. It's kind of nutty, but I'm sure things like that will happen."

"The frightful thought

might be that one day you just go to [a] studio and be photographed like a police photograph—from each side smiling—and then they'll manipulate and animate you through a whole film," fears Udo Kier, the German actor whose career ranges from *Andy Warhol's Dracula* to *Johnny Mnemonic*—and whose technophobia extends as far as to refusing to learn how to operate a computer. "You wouldn't have to work anymore. I think that's frightening. I don't like the idea."

No, Udo, you'd actually keep working. CG scanning could conceivably have Hollywood actors appearing in more films than Antonio

Banderas, even from beyond the grave. When Ken Ralston resurrected Humphrey Bogart from old footage to play a cameo beside John Lithgow and Isabella Rossellini for the "You Murderer!" episode of *Tales From The Crypt*, Bogart's estate was paid for the performance and the deceased actor was even given top billing.

But this case, as well as DreamQuest's efforts on *The Crow*, are only the first faint ripples on the surface of waters that run very deep. It's likely that the tragic events of *The Crow*, combined with the growing awareness of how its star was made to rise phoenix-like from the ashes

will lead to a new practice of scanning actors preventatively during pre-production. That way if an accident occurs, the film can be completed with their CG double.

Of course, one of Hollywood's best-kept secrets is that many of our top stars have *already* had themselves scanned. Why allow the public to see one's self grow even a day older? You just know these scanned celebrities are waiting for one daring soul to hire out his or her CG persona before the floodgates open. Well, that dam may be about to break. Rumor has it that Marlon Brando has finagled New Line into backing his own personal R & D project. In exchange for his live in-person performances in *Don Juan DeMarco* and the upcoming *Island of Dr. Moreau* he will be paid to complete another in *absentia* (rumor has it he may be doing the part of Moreau in *absentia*). Also, Brando is reportedly working on a TV project titled *Brando On Brando* where the actor interviews his characters from previous films and allows them to interview each other, via advanced CG doubles.

Digitization is a relatively simple process where the actor makes every conceivable facial expression and utters ever consonant and vowel sound as the cyberscan makes a 360-degree orbit around their head. During each second and a half spin, one laser beam scans their features and another their color data, taking an actual 3-D picture as it revolves around their head. While the cost of the scan is low, booking up the data points to animate an actor's face is quite costly, up to a hundred thousand dollars—and that's not including compositing the synthespian into scenes with other flesh-and-blood actors. On the other hand, whatever the price, it's still probably cheaper than paying some top stars' posh salaries. Understandably this cuts two ways: Actors eager to reap the financial benefits of licensing

themselves simultaneously to an unlimited number of projects are also clearly concerned about what others might do with their CG images once they have it in their greedy little mitts.

Since the technology now exists to entirely alter what a performer says or does, contracts these days are getting progressively more and more specific about the exact services to be provided. The fear is that actors may find themselves appearing in roles they didn't authorize, projects they'd never want to be associated with, doing things they wouldn't be caught dead doing. But hell, such is the nature of the business.

everything you know is wrong

Not only can CG effects artists build a fake actor, *Forrest Gump* proved they could take pieces of the actor away. Forrest's companion on his shrimping expeditions and former commanding officer, Lt. Dan Taylor, who lost his lower legs during the Vietnam war, presented ILM with an even more elaborate problem—as the body parts of the actor playing Lt. Dan, Gary Sinise, were all present and accounted for.

Uncompromising as ever, Zemeckis refused to use traditional leg-binding techniques to create the illusion of leglessness, instead directing Ken Ralston and his ILM team to devise effects that would sell Lt. Dan's affliction beyond a doubt. "It's not just because his legs were tucked under him," Ralston says, "Gary looked like he had no legs because we eliminated them. We had Gary wear bluescreen stockings over his feet and lower legs that tucked into the ends of his pants, which were knotted around his 'stumps'. We did blank plate passes of each location to add back the information Gary's lower legs blocked. After we removed his lower legs, we did some 3-D work and added shadows to make the

ends of his legs blend organically into the scene."

Effects like these firmly establish *Forrest Gump* as the watershed of the digital age. But this accomplishment wasn't the result of the freshman pairing of a director new to CG teaming with a visual-effects artist—far from it. The collaboration of effects virtuoso Ken Ralston with director Robert Zemeckis began on *Back to the Future* and is still going strong some half-dozen films later. It's an unprecedented collaboration, but Zemeckis will stop at nothing to get the shot he wants, even if it means having Industrial Light & Magic manufacture it pixel by pixel, and Ralston has never failed him. That unwavering flexibility on Zemeckis' *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* and *Death Becomes Her* garnered Ralston some Academy Awards. Despite the torments inflicted by Zemeckis' seat-of-his-pants filmmaking approach, Ralston delights in providing Zemeckis with a filmic language based on visual effects that feed the director's imagination and virtually became the basis of his unique style. "[On *Gump*,] we were both learning as we went along," Zemeckis tells. "But that's when I saw the big shift in the way films were going to be made, and a big light went on for CG for me."

The fable-like story of *Forrest Gump*'s journey through modern American history represents a dramatic departure for Zemeckis in terms of emotional power as well as a new direction for Ralston, and, by extension, ILM and CG. While not as flashy as *Jurassic Park*, *Forrest Gump* used the tools that vitalized Spielberg's prehistoric behemoths to augment reality in ways heretofore undreamed of.

"Of course, there were limitations to what Bob asked us to do and believe me, we felt them all!" reveals Ralston. "The toughest thing, and I said this on *Death Becomes*

Her, is trying to re-create reality. The more surreal an image is, the more leeway we have to fake our way through because people can't identify with it. This show was heavily reality-based."

Zemeckis naturally toyed with reality from *Forrest Gump*'s very first shot, the metaphorical image of a feather tossed about by the wind. That feather didn't fall from ILM's cap; at almost four minutes, the shot is the longest digital composite in film history, shattering ILM's previous record for *The Flintstones*' opening sequence. Helmed by Co-Computer Graphics Supervisor, Stephen Rosenbaum, the shot begins as the feather magically dances from the heavens through a Georgian town square, eventually landing at Forrest Gump's feet. He leans over from his park-bench, picks the feather up, placing it in his ever-present volume of *Curious George*, and the story begins.

"We had about 30 differ-

ent takes of the feather being puppeted at different frame rates—one take where it was just floating, another where it was twisting around and so on," says Rosenbaum. "Peter [Daulton, who handled the shot,] choreographed this enormous 4,000-frame sequence by combining them into one seamless animation. Peter did a lot of subtle work, like tracking the feather's reflection in a car windshield, to blend it seamlessly into the environment."

Perhaps no film in history has used so many effects to mimic what we think of as reality. Intent on wringing the most emotion from every sequence, Zemeckis demanded that calm seas be made turbulent, clear skies cloudy and empty space be filled with moving spectators. "This project is four times the size of *Jurassic Park* in terms of complexity and the size of the crew," says Rosenbaum who, along with his ILM co-conspirators, implemented Zemeckis and Ralston's vision of *Forrest*





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PlayStation



FROM SPACESHIPS TO DINOSAURS

Another area some say is likely to see a huge intrusion by computers is special-effects miniatures. People may have forgotten the legacy of *The Last Starfighter*, but Babylon 5, *seaQuest* DSV and *Space: Above And Beyond* may serve as current inducements to sample the increasing power of digital. Not so, argues ace prop and modelmaker Greg Jein, whose most famous creation, the Mothership from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, now graces the Smithsonian Institute. Jein, whose credits include *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine* and *Star Gate*, feels that the prohibitive costs of digital modeling will force producers to stick with the tried, true and inexpensive technique of miniatures. "For *Star Gate*, the physical construction costs of the models were \$8,000-10,000 per spaceship, while computer generating them would cost somewhere in the area of \$35,000. If someone doesn't have that kind of money to play with, they'll find a good modelmaker to do it for them."

Dennis Muren on the other hand brims with excitement thinking of the potential of CG miniatures. "In the *Star Wars* films, you've seen lots of X-wing fighters blow up, but those were always little models shot with high-speed cameras. You've never seen a real X-wing really blow up, but by using CG, you might just suddenly see what looks like a real full-sized X-wing really explode. It would be all fake, of course, but you'd see the structure inside tearing apart,

the physics of this piece blowing off that piece. Then you might look back at *Star Wars* someday and say, 'This looks terrible.'"

The legendary effects wizard of 2001: *A Space Odyssey* Doug Trumbull feels that miniatures and motion-control will soon be outdated techniques of the past: "I think it's generally much easier and less expensive now to do that whole process using computer graphics. It immensely gives you much more facility. You've got no wires, no rigs, nothing to interfere with the full three-dimensional movement of that object spatially, and it means you don't just have to have one spaceship, you can have hundreds of them."

The time-honored field of stop-motion puppet animation was of course pioneered by Willis O'Brien, the man who gave us *The Lost World* (1925) and *King Kong* (1933). The torch was not long after picked up by O'Brien's brilliant protégé, Ray Harryhausen, who worked at his master's side on *Mighty Joe Young* (1949) before striking out on his own, creating some 15 feature films including the classics *Twenty Million Miles to Earth*, *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* and *Javan and the Argonauts*, all of which employed extensive stop-motion animation effects. Steven

Spielberg so valued Harryhausen's opinion that he was virtually the only outsider to see test footage of *Jurassic Park*'s CG behemoths. When he finally saw the finished film at a screening at Universal Studios, Harryhausen's emotions were decidedly mixed. Harryhausen mused, "particularly the dinosaur scenes,

ent crafts—molds, making, casting, modeling, drawing in order to put my ideas on paper. I think that might be lost in this new development. You won't have to know that because you can hire other people to do it. There's a certain joy in accumulating knowledge, and that may be lost in pushing buttons. I think one has to accept change. Through the ages, that's the only constant."

which were most impressive. But the emphasis these days seems to be to make things as real as possible. That's like asking a painter to go out and paint a landscape exactly as you could take a photograph of it. Then there's no interpretation. "When I was starting out, I couldn't find anyone else interested in helping me outside of my father, so I was forced to learn many differ-

"ONE BONEHEAD CALL AND THIS

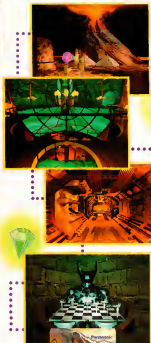


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Gump: "People won't realize that most of the effects in the film were designed to enhance reality, which I find more enjoyable work than a fantasy film."

Those effects elevated a sweetly sorrowful scene, where young Forrest and his best girlfriend, Jenny, hide from her abusive father in a cornfield. As they pray to become birds and fly away, a whole flock of doves suddenly takes wing from out of the corn. "They tried to use real birds on location," explains Rosenbaum, "but every time they let them go, the birds flew off in the wrong direction! So James Strauss, who animated on *Jurassic Park* and *The Mask*, modeled and animated three dozen birds in the computer. It wasn't easy: the original plate was shot with a 20mm wide angle lens, so we had to build that distortion into the animation, and the birds had to look absolutely realistic. James started with one bird, developed its flight and character animation, and used it as the basis for the flock."

Audiences probably won't spot the dozen or so CG helicopters buzzing through the skies during Forrest's tour of duty in Vietnam, or catch on to Yusei Usagi's CG matte shots that transformed a pine-covered area of South Carolina into a Vietnamese landscape replete with rocky mountains and palm trees swaying in the wind. Nor will they suspect that the phosphorous tracer fire that neatly wiped out Forrest's platoon was also a CG effect.

While in the army, Forrest's aptitude for Ping Pong lands him on the U.S. team for the world championship in China. The vast arena, painted Communist red and crammed with 100,000 spectators, was a virtual ILM invention down to the CG Ping-Pong ball. The rapidfire match between Forrest and the Chinese champion was shot without a Ping-Pong ball because no human being could maintain



the breakneck pace Zemeckis wanted. "So we animated the ping pong ball!" grins Rosenbaum, who supervised the animation. "We had a metronome with a high pitch and a low pitch going back and forth on-set. Tom Hanks was supposed to swing on the low pitch and his opponent, Valentine, swung on the high pitch, but they often got off-synch because they were really supposed to be going at it! Then one of our star animators, Brian Van't Hul, scanned a photograph of a Ping-Pong ball into the computer and animated it so it had a sense of weight, a sense of being affected by gravity, and some topspin. He also adjusted the character of the motion blur so when the ball bounced on the table, there was actually a 'V'-shaped blur."

At the Ping-Pong match and in various football stadiums, Zemeckis charged ILM to create moving crowds of thousands

to fill the arenas to capacity but those crowd enhancements paled before the 200,000 people Forrest faced at a peace rally in front of the Washington Monument. "We had eight shots to do there that were all mind-numbingly complicated," Ralston sighs. "We had a very small crowd, 1000 people, all dressed appropriately and waving signs, so every color was in these shots, and there's all this minuscule. It's amazing how quickly that space ate up 1000 people. To make matters worse, the shoot itself was awful; the temperature dropped like 30 degrees, it was freezing and everyone was dressed in light clothes so they sustained—only half of them came back after lunch!" When a reporter compares crowd replication to cutting and pasting, Ralston responds emphatically, "Kinda, only it takes five months to do!"

DIFFERENT IN THE BACKSTAGE

ILM's CG work was a lot of fun, says Rosenbaum, but it was also hellishly complicated. "You're not just animating—there's a lot of technical elements. And every time you do a scene, but you can't find a generator or a camera effect for an animated film."

"You could make it a type of film," contends Dennis Muren, "but the film's not going to be good. Maybe eventually you'd be able to do that, but you're looking at millions of dollars of gear and I don't know what you gain. You're still got a poor actor working in front of bluescreen. That's why I think the 'digital backlash' everyone's talking about is not going to function."

"I think realistic filmmakers are looking at this technology and saying, 'I can do three times as many matte shots now and they look better for the same price.' But some folks like to make the big leap and go beyond that, which is what we're talking about. There's an awful lot of techies, not film people, who are now so in demand, but these 'hot properties' really don't have a clue as to how films are made."

However, *Batman Forever* used the much-talked-about digital backdrop throughout most of the film—at least one of sorts. In an unprecedented move, Dykstra convinced director Joel Schumacher to re-create Gotham and its environs, including Arkham Asylum and Wayne Enterprises, from the ground up, largely using computer graphics. "We wanted to show the entire city of Gotham, then move right into it," Dykstra explains. "That's tough to do with a miniature unless its scale is huge, so WBTT [Warner Bros.' animation department] used CG to achieve that."

WBTT was the first effects team on the scene. Having worked on *Batman Returns*, WBTT's Senior Visual-Effects Supervisor John Scheele understood the advantages of miniature photography. But



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he also wanted to get back to his computer-animation roots (he worked on Disney's *Tron*) and create the first digital backlog. While that term's become an industry catchphrase, at Warner Bros. it's a reality. "We computer-modeled the entire Warner lot, replicating the structures exactly," Scheele says. "That way, we can quickly enhance buildings in our backlog streets via dimensional matte paintings."

As a reward, Dykstra handed WBET the toughest assignment he could imagine: the film's make-or-break opening shot panning across Gotham City, tracking way into the Wayne Enterprises skyscraper—at sunset. "Right away, the first shot answers the question of how this film will be different," Scheele says proudly. "You see Gotham in an expanse you've never seen before. Then the camera slowly approaches this huge round window and pushes into Bruce Wayne's office. It's breathtaking stuff."

turn & face the strange

The times are surely a'changin' for the special-effects industry in these oh-so-turbulent days. While many blame the phenomenal success of *Jurassic Park*'s CG heavyweights for the industry shift, the writing's actually been on the monitor for nearly a decade. Still, every aspect of the effects business seems suddenly in flux, while many predict that traditional approaches are the real dinosaurs in the wake of *Jurassic Park* and *Casper*.

Dennis Muren—who co-supervised both films' digital concoctions—can't see himself working on an effects film that wouldn't employ digital techniques. "I'm driven by images, never by technology," he insists, "but the potential of computer graphics is phenomenal. I don't know if it's the way to do everything, but speaking for myself, if a show comes into ILM that interests me, I'm going to do it CG."



While even ILM's effects artists seem shellshocked by the furious advent of a CG revolution they created but didn't anticipate, there is one insider who wonders why it took so damn long. Sherry McKenna was visual effects producer on a little-remembered film called *The Last Starfighter*, the first feature to employ computer-generated spaceships. But the technology just didn't take off at the time, possibly due to the film's lack of commercial success. "Whatever the reason," McKenna explains, "it's taken a lot longer than I thought for CG to catch on. Ten years ago, it was real hard to instill in producers a vision of all the things computers could accomplish based on what they saw in

The Last Starfighter and 2010. Nobody believed we could create something that didn't look computer-generated."

Nowadays, with directors eager to work with the new technology, we know differently. But even in the noteworthy "awkward teen years" of CG growth, when ILM was crafting cutting-edge imagery for *Willow*, *The Abyss* and *T2*, filmmakers were slow to catch on to computer effects' remarkable flexibility. Ironically, while they may have lacked the creative vision to see the future in a watery phallus or mercurial man, once producers saw an organic creature replicated digitally, something clicked in their minds—and for many that was the *chug!*

of a cash register. "What *Jurassic Park* did was legitimize the money-making potential of synthetic images," says Praxis Film Works topper Rob Blalack, who holds an Academy Award for his work on *Star Wars*. "And as a consequence of that, there's going to be an enormous investment by producers to try to get the type of return *JP* had, which is the way the film business works. You're going to see a lot of attempts to mimic that success, which is healthy for our end of the business because it promotes effects in general."

But as producers leap off the old-school techniques and head like lemmings toward digital effects, there is a growing fear that many of the most creative effects people—modelmakers, matte painters, stop-motion animators—will be shunted aside because their age-old physical techniques will have no place in the digital "effects in a box" of CG. "Some people are so quick to jump off the old and jump on the new that they forget that they're not looking realistically at these things," says Richard Edlund (whose Boss Films since moved away from film to work on their gaming division). "We have lots of techniques that work and are inexpensive and quick that would be very difficult to do on the computer. Until we start getting all the chewing gum and baling wire programs in the computer, we're going to be using gum and baling wire to make shots."

Ken Ralston is also circumspect about CG's shiny, happy future. "One of the weak points with computer graphics in films is that at the end of every movie, there are last-minute changes, and quick changes in computer graphics don't normally exist. It's always a slow, painful change," winces Ralston, "and you can't make it go faster."

"Computers are tools invented to duplicate man's process of generating ideas,"

counters senior computer animator Steve Williams (*Jurassic Park*, *The Mask*), "and this stupid little calculation device is going to do nothing but grow. In 10 years, the term computer graphics will disappear, because the computer will affect every facet of production. Essentially the computer screen will become the animation department, the modelmaking department and the matte department. You'll have one screen that does everything."

But when that happens, Ken Ralston speculates, there might be a big surprise in store: "Soon, everything's going to be so technically proficient that the only thing left is how you tell that story. If you tell it badly, it's going to look really bad!"

Fathead Mann, director and screenplay author of the upcoming *Lawnmower Man II*, has similar concerns. "[*LM II*] is the perfect example of the ongoing synthesis between the computer industry and the film industry. This kind of digitizing just wasn't possible a few years ago. Now, you imagine it and it's done. I just hope we don't lose the sense of storytelling and character."

In the future, there may be many more would-be Leonardos at the console, as Richard Faldut feared. And at that time, the major effects houses may find themselves competing with hackers working out of their garages.

As ILM, Digital Domain and DreamQuest perfect one CG technique after another, their supremacy in the field may face challenges from

renegade professionals with only a few computer consoles, especially as knockoffs of the software they've created becomes available off-the-shelf. For example, a crude version of the morph program that threw the mechanical makeup and visual-effects communities into such a tizzy is currently available for \$89! How long will it be before someone working at their PC

wake is what the others will have access to."

Alarmists fear that as CG capabilities grow, other even more time-honored traditions may be threatened by the new technology: George Lucas is reportedly searching for ways to create sets and locations digitally, and it's been suggested that within 10 years, actors may be completely replaced with synthetic performers.



can create comparable imagery to the big boys? "Yes, today for \$89 you can buy a software package that'll run on your Macintosh and allow you to do very rough morphs, or you can buy a package from ATDG that allows you to do morphing better than we were able to do at ILM in 1991," affirms Digital Domain head Scott Ross. "The trail that's left in our

The end result, in the most techno of all possible futures, may be movies created entirely at the ultimate workstation, which could eventually supplant filmmaking as we know it.

"I see it as becoming more and more a talent-driven business," Richard Faldut says. "I envision at some point not too far away we'll be able to import some obscure piece of software

from Nigeria because some guy has hacked it there and we'll find out about it and combine it with something else through a translation program we get from Greenland! When everyone's all file-roped or phone-line networked, we'll be able to put all kinds of obscure software and images together. It's an interesting and formidable future, but I don't see being dented."

"I feel like we're genuinely fortunate as a group to be at a point in time where digital technology is so new that it hasn't quite formed," says

Pete Kozachik, cinematographer and visual effects supervisor for *Nightmare Before Christmas* and the upcoming *James And The Giant Peach*. "It hasn't been given a really strong defining methodology like Disney animation, where they have their punch holes just so. We have a great opportunity right now to take this tool and shape it till it fits our hands."

Speak of the devil, and he might appear. All eyes are aimed at what appears to even further up the ante in CG evolution, Disney's upcoming *Toy Story*—the first full-length film entirely created through the use of computer animation, due out this winter.

Now, with advances prophesied beyond this decade being cranked out annually, audiences and filmmakers alike can only wait and watch as Silicon Valley and Hollywood rush to merge into a single geographic location. ♦

by Ron Magid With
The Editors of FUSION

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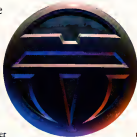


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Getting

The Making of
an Interactive Movie



Ripped

By John R. Withers



The assistant director prepares the soundstage for the next shot. "Everyone, settle," he shouts, "everyone quiet...roll in three...two..." "Uh, excuse me," says one actor dressed in a medical examiner's costume, "Shouldn't we put the guts back in the girl?" Everyone mumbles their agreement and the shot is postponed while the special-effects "guts," actually lined sausages smeared with plenty of artificial blood, are stuffed back in the dummy of a deceased girl that is the central image of this shot.



In *Ripper* there are dead bodies, guts, blood, gun shots and all of the other fare of the average horror movie...

The place is a soundstage in Manhattan, and this event is the film sequence shooting for *Table 2 Interactive's* newest game, *Ripper*.

Take 2 is new to live film footage. While they used some minor video and lots of voice acting for their *Hell: A Cyberpunk Adventure* released last year, doing live film shoots is definitely a step up for them.

"We aren't going to step in and do this halfway. We are hiring professionals from the outset to make this happen. What we don't want is for this to look like a couple of game designers grabbed a video camera and shot the film," says F.J. Emonson, *Ripper's* producer.

Take 2 is paying the price to make this happen professionally. In the month and a half of on-again, off-again shooting over \$2.55 million will be spent to put the film for the game. Of that, over \$600,000 will go to pay stars like Christopher Walken,

Burgess Meredith and John Rhys-Davies.

However, a lot of that money will also go to just the traditional film-credit titles: Director, assistant director, camera operator, key grip and,

critically, special effects. Everything needed to make a motion picture is needed to shoot film footage for the game.

The story line of *Ripper* is that a futuristic version of Jack the Ripper is haunting the cyberscape of lower Manhattan in 2040. Your job as the protagonist of the story is to hunt him down.

If this were a traditional film, it would definitely be a horror film. And horror films, as any B-movie buff knows, means special effects. Many people go to horror movies to see interesting blood and gore effects as much as anything else. This makes the special effects in *Ripper* a critical part of the filmed segments.

This might seem rather odd at first blush. Think about it. A computer game relies, obviously, on computer graphics. It would seem that the only special effects needed are those that graphics wizards can create. Since major motion pictures now are using SGI's to make much of their magic, why would a game run on a computer need traditional Hollywood special effects?


"It depends on what you are doing," says John Antonino, *Ripper's* co-designer. "We do use some graphic special effects, but for a great deal of stuff it is more cost effective to work with the real thing on film. Or real fake thing, depending on how you look at it. Secondly, there is a different quality to the work. Doing as much as you can on the film makes things look better since they have the same visual quality as the background."

In *Ripper* there are dead bodies, guts, blood, gun shots and all of the other fare of the average horror movie, including one incredibly cool exploding



stomach sequence. All of these are created by traditional special effects techniques.

The man who makes all these special effects happen on the film is Bryan Holt, a 15-year veteran of the industry. Holt has worked on



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Total Recall, The Abyss and many other feature films.

Ripper is actually Holt's second computer-game excursion, having also worked on some of the special effects for Acclaim's *Batman Forever* game.

It would seem that there would be many differences between working on films and working in the video-game industry, and while there are some differences, Holt sees them as positive.

"The biggest difference is in attitude. Movie people have funky attitudes and egos. Here these people are really cool. It is an entirely different feel in someone working on movies," Holt says.

Holt also isn't worried by the advance of technology putting him out of work. As a special-effects professional, Holt keeps a close eye on technology and has even built a number of robots and other high-tech wonders. But he doesn't see a time in the near future where there isn't going to be a call for his services.

"There are still things that a machine can't do. And others that it can't do as easily. While more and more work is going to be aided by the computers, they aren't going to be taking over all special effects any time soon."

But Holt does like working in conjunction with the graphics guys. "The generated backgrounds they create are cool. They help and enhance you wouldn't be able to get on a budget."

But he doesn't rely on the graphics to help take some of the stress. "There is no difference in what I would do for this shoot or for a movie. I make everything I do as real as possible. I want everything to look terrifying, and realistic on the screen. That's what I get paid for," he says.

But while things might be the same for

Holt, other members of the crew do have some unique problems working in this way.

One of the people who has to make the biggest changes from traditional film work is Scott Cohen, the actor bringing the role of the player to life.

To understand the problem faced by

make sure that I know exactly where the character is in the story and what he is thinking at that point and how much he knows. Depending on the branching, it's really like playing a different character, because the things that have happened leading up to the scene will be totally different and make the character react in a

Instead of a scene having only one outcome, as in a traditional script, the game script for *Ripper* has multiple outcomes based on various actions the player can take.

Cohen, one must understand the difference between an interactive game script and a normal film script. While each is written with lines and blocking and all the traditional paraphernalia, there is one profound difference: branching.

Instead of a scene having only one outcome, as in a traditional script, the game script for *Ripper* has multiple outcomes based on various actions the player can take. These outcomes lead to branches of scenes that are similar, but often fundamentally different in the information available to the player (or actor) and the action that takes place.

"Dealing with the branches is very hard. The scenes tend to be very short and are shot in a sequence that has nothing to do with how they will show up. So like scenes even shot I have to

different ones. I constantly have to keep track of that to make sure I act the character properly. I have blown it a couple of times and had to reshoot a scene because I missed where we were in the branch and played it wrong."

But aren't normal movies normally shot out of sequence?

"The lead on any movie has the same problem, but here it is just much more involved."

Another difference between a standard film and a game shoot is in the matter of blocking. Blocking is figuring out where actors will move on a set during a scene. For *Ripper*, almost all of the backgrounds are computer-generated. On one side of the set or banks of graphic computer consoles, busy enough to make even the most jaded geek drool. The graphics team from *Take 2* uses these consoles to generate backgrounds and set objects on the fly.

The actual set itself is almost completely barren. Painted in a special color called chroma blue, the set only holds a few items that will be on the video as real objects. Everything else, from backgrounds to tables and furnishings, will be put in by the graphics team overlaid by the computers on the chroma blue background of the real set.

This means that no one just looking at the set knows where the generated objects really are. A monitor beside the director's chair allows him to see the whole set as it appears to the computer, complete with the real actors and objects and the com-



puter-generated overlay, but other than this monitor, there is no other way to judge if an actor is, for example, standing in the middle of a computer-generated table.

"The blocking is quite a bit more exacting, since most of the stuff isn't there," says Cohen.

"It is difficult to block to an imaginary set. We have to use tape blocks, putting tape on the floor, and other careful checks to make sure the film and background match properly," says Justin Miller, the first assistant director for the *Ripper* shoot.

Continuity is also an area of extreme concern. Continuity is making sure that everything is in order and properly in sequence with everything else. A major job with a shoot that might consist of hundreds of separate scenes.

"Everything you shoot has to be in continuity. It all has to be very carefully timed and indexed, since it not only has to go in with the sound and in sequence with the other shots, but also has to mesh with the computer-generated graphics. A great deal of care has to be taken."

Miller also got paid to be a common meme among gamers and some of the computer-aware public, that working on a computer game is somehow less desirable than working in film.

"This work doesn't have a bad rap with crews at all. As a matter of fact, many of them like it a lot because it is a new experience over what they have done in the past."

Holt agrees. "I choose to do this. I can get work without a problem. I like doing this work. This is a new medium and it is only going to get bigger. With two of these types of projects already, I might be the first interactive FX specialist, and I like that idea."

Phil Parmet, the director for *Ripper* is also something of a specialist in this new emerging field, having also worked on *Lone Star*, *The Legend of Tully Bodine* for Rocket Science games. Parmet sees the current technology of game video as being much like early film work.

"There are some challenges here because everything is a one-camera shot. Because of the generated backgrounds, you can't move the camera like you would during a normal film shoot. Hence, we have to take each shot with a static camera. Early films were the same way, before they learned how to move the camera around. In that way it is something like a play, with only one angle."

Parmet also agrees with the rest of the crew in that he doesn't see games work as being somehow second rate to films.

"This is an emerging form. Someday it will be important. Right now it is pretty limited, from the director's point of view. The technology isn't there to allow many



of the things we can do on film. But as time goes on, this kind of production or something akin to it will be making very interesting changes in the medium."

Because of the camera limitations and continuity concerns, editing is a primary responsibility. To make the final tape look good, professional editing to integrate the shots turned out to be a must for *Ripper*.

"We hadn't really thought much about the editing," says E.J. Lennon.

"But then we started looking at all this raw footage, and realized if we wanted it to be the best it could

be, we were going to have to hire a professional editing company. It was a good investment. They have really made a tremendous difference."

The editing suite is a few blocks from the soundstage in Manhattan, and once there and looking at the results, it is easy to understand what Lennon means.

In a small office filled with expensive computer gear, Pamela Martin edits the raw footage from the shoot and turns it into edited sequences. While we were there, she moused up raw shots onto her monitor for us to view and then ran the finished scenes with all the editing done.

It is impossible to properly describe the change in point. But it is something akin to the difference between viewing a home video and then changing the channel on your TV to *The X-Files*. By integrating various points of view from different shots, the raw footage becomes something you'd expect to see on television or in a theater.

"We started looking at all this raw footage and realized if we wanted it to be the best we were going to have to hire an editing company."

It is in the editing suite, looking at the final product of all the work on the set, that *Ripper* gets a sense of what Take 2 paid all this money for. A shooting set is a strange thing. Weird people rush around, and the audience resembles more that of a relaxed cocktail party than a heavy-duty work environment. And the raw footage coming through on the set monitors causes one to wonder: The special effects, so impressive when viewed in a theater, look more than a little hokey, and actors who are big on the screen seem like just average people in real life.

But looking at the edited footage, another view emerges entirely. This is the real deal. Exploding guts cause the viewer to rock back in his or her chair with disgust, even if you saw how it was filmed and know the trick. The dead body, so silly looking in real life, is suddenly gruesome when the film is finished.

Back at the soundstage, they are still working on the seeming interminable sequence of shots in the morgue with the medical examiner standing over the body of a dead girl.

"Everyone settle," shouts the assistant director. "One, and three...two..."

"Wait," says one of the crew looking on. "Don't we want to get the blood off his forehead?"

An Important Step In Interactive Storytelling?

P.J. Lennon has been telling stories on the computer screen for a number of years. First as one of the key players in Paragon Software and lately as a producer at Take 2 Interactive. While some games might get better reviews than others, anyone who really looks at games he has helped design will note that they are always long on story.

Lennon sees a new medium emerging, the interactive story. But the real question is if the public and technology are ready for it.

"You know, we could just make shooter games and make money. But that isn't the point. What I want to see is the creation of a new medium. Games with real stories. Games for adults that engage the mind. But the big question is are people ready for it?"

"I really can't say for sure. A lot of the game press have declared the interactive story/game dead. I am not talking about wrapping video footage and backstory around a shooter like Wing Commander, but interactive games that have a real and engaging story that unfolds as you play. These types of games aren't getting good reviews. Most of the time they get bad press because they don't have enough playability. That might be a good charge. Many games don't. With *Hell*, for example, we probably should have made the combat more interactive.

"But is there a market for these games at all? Games for adults that mix play with real dramatic values? I obviously think so, or we wouldn't be working so hard on this project. But there is still a risk; this is a brand-new medium. I know that with *Ripper* we are going to do our best to find out for sure. We have really worked on the engine to make sure that there is active playability. We have the actors who can really bring out the parts, and we have worked on the script to make it the best we can make it.

"If *Ripper* doesn't do well, assuming we don't make any big mistakes in production between now and release, I am going to be worried for the adult interactive adventure game as a market. There is a time and a place for everything, and we need to find out if people are ready for real dramatic presentations in an interactive format."



An Interview with Christopher Walken



SH: You've been very successful in movies. Why did you get involved with a CD-ROM project, and how did you get involved?

CW: My agent called me and told me [people] are starting to do this now, there are a lot of actors doing it.

SH: You are doing Ripper and you are doing the Darkening with Origin, yes?

CW: I did the Darkening, yeah. It was two days over in England.

SH: Is this fun?

CW: It's different. It's interesting. The one I did before [the Darkening] had sets, this doesn't, but it's interesting.

SH: We've had people tell us that doing an interactive project is just like acting in a movie and that it's nothing like acting in a movie. What's your take?

CW: Well, I'm reading my lines off a teleprompter, which is nothing like a movie, but that's only because the job came on such short notice and it's easier to do the teleprompter thing. For me, it's a little more like Saturday Night Live, where I read off cue cards.

SH: We've also heard it's a lot like being on stage.

CW: Yes, except that I'm reading my lines.

SH: Did you know anything about interactive media before these projects?

CW: No, I can't even turn on a computer. I've never seen a CD-ROM.

SH: As an actor, is this as legitimate a medium as television, film or theater?

CW: Sure. You never know what's going to happen to this—this [medium] is obviously something that's just beginning.

SH: Do you worry about getting typecast? You seem to tend toward playing the heavies a lot.

CW: No.

SH: Do you have a favorite role that you've done?

CW: No.

SH: Any projects you wish you hadn't done?

Christopher Walken picked it up in pulp fiction as the strangely intense Captain Blood, but in a recent interview with **FUSION** Contributing Editor Steve Honeywell, the *Isle of the Dead* star was as quiet as a constipated P.O.W. with a gold watch to hide. Recently, the actor Walken finished filming for two CD-ROM projects, *Take 2's Ripper*, scheduled for a November release and Origin's *The Darkening*, due out in February of 1996. Here's what Walken didn't have to say about his dark and brooding roles in the soon-to-be-released CD-ROM titles:

CW: Oh, just *Take 2*!

SH: What are you working on after this?

CW: I'm going to do a bunch of things in *Shogun* [which is due in England [the first of next week, and after tomorrow, in the States]].

SH: Walken is a very successful interactive project.

CW: Sure. Well, we don't really see what it's like when it's in a computer, but now it's just people at the computer. It's a whole different ballgame, at least as movies go. Maybe that's where it will go, into computerized sets.

SH: Is it hard to keep what the director knows in mind when in a given scene what he knows could change depending on what the player knows?

CW: "No, the lines are different. I guess it's a good thing I didn't think of that."

SH: You just did a movie with *Johnny Suede*.

CW: Nick of Time, it's called.

SH: What role do you play in that?

CW: I play a villain. It's a sort of a villain.

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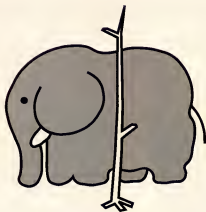
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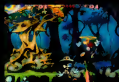
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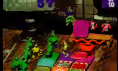
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How do they do that?



SHATNER'S STAR

Taking TekWar Beyond Turner



recently acquired a computer with all of its components, but I didn't know how to turn it on. The guy showed me how, but I forgot," William Shatner admits, though he shows little embarrassment over the incident.

Until recently, Shatner had no reason to look into computers; after all, the world had accepted him as Captain James Tiberius Kirk of the Starship Enterprise long before IBM invented the personal computer. With few exceptions such as on-line junkie Sandra Bullock and Mac-novice Yasmine Bleeth, few actors even own a computer.

Last year, however, Shatner came up with a good reason to buy a computer. He formed a partnership with IntraCorp (a.k.a. Capstone) to publish a computer game based on his TekWar novels.

Returning to his story about buying a computer, Shatner hesitates for a second and explains why it was never his fault that he couldn't turn the machine on. "Some guys from IntraCorp came over to show me the latest advances on the TekWar game.

They couldn't get the computer going either, so I called the guy who sold it to me to fix it. He came over and muttered something and said, 'It's going to work now,' and left."

"I didn't use it for about a month and then this past week I've been having somebody come in and show me how to play all the games. [I've been boning up on games, not only for TekWar, but for other projects I have in mind.] He had trouble getting that computer running. I'm in a rage of frustration!"

THE BEGINNING OF TEKWAR

"I was filming one of the Star Trek movies—I was also directing it. There were some strikes, I think the Teamsters struck. We were in pre-production and everything had to stop. We were there for three...four...five months in which nothing happened and there was no place I could go."

Looking for a project that would distract

himself, Shatner began creating his first TekWar novel. "I essentially just put a cop in the future. I just lurched into the

such licensed games as Zorro, Honey the Clown and Wayne's World, the company has earned a reputation as a reliable partner

Rom was a good avenue to explore with TekWar," says Shatner, "but I didn't know which company to go with. There were several companies that were vying to do the TekWar game. "We [Universal Studios] studied them all, and Capstone won the competition and we decided that Capstone was the one to do it."

"When IntraCorp first approached me, I had one condition—the game could not be about killing."

Unlike other Doom games in which you shoot everything that moves, TekWar has pedestrians. Your job is to keep them alive.

Pedestrians aren't the only characters you try to preserve in TekWar. While you can finish the game by simply killing your enemies, you don't score points unless you stun them, arrest them and bring them in alive.

Rather than turning the entire project over to Capstone, Shatner came in as a partner. Capstone honored his request about broadening the game from the simple search-and-destroy missions found in Doom and other first-person games. Shatner admits that the game looks different than

he might have originally pictured it, but says he is satisfied.

"It's a totally different vision—

TRACKS

future—the era of Star Trek."

The mixture was too good to be true—perhaps the most recognized face in science fiction writes a sci-fi novel. Success had to follow.

"The book was written and it sold well and got good notices, and I wrote others and along comes Marvel Comics and they wanted to do a comic of it. I thought if the comic books start sketching things out, they would make good storyboards for a film—if anybody wanted to make a film about TekWar."

"By that time I had realized that I had unconsciously made a mistake. I'd made it too similar to Star Trek. I asked Marvel Comics to place the whole thing 50 years from now and essentially what I dreamed might happen happened—along comes a movie company."

According to Shatner, setting TekWar in the near future appealed because it allowed him to create a reliably accurate portrait. "I held a symposium for the public before starting TekWar. I invited a number of futurists to attend and to discourse on what the future of their particular discipline might be like. There was a man who talked about what the legal system would be like. Another man discussed what the police would be like. Another talked about architecture."

"Fifty years from now is close enough that it won't be that different from today. If you compare 1940 to 1990, it isn't that different. The same political parties are still around. The cars look similar—a 1940s car isn't all that different from a 1990s car. Therefore, I feel that there will be a great deal of the 1990s in the 2040s. The new technologies, although glossy and shiny, may not be all that breakthrough."

among movie studios. That reputation extended to Universal Studios, the studio producing TekWar—a syndicated television program based on Shatner's novels.

"We have an eight-year relationship with Universal Studios," explains Leigh Rothschild, CEO of Capstone. "We did Miami Vice. We published a game based on Steven Spielberg's American Tale and a number of other Universal Studios properties."

"We're always looking for the best and the brightest projects. When we saw TekWar, we were just absolutely attracted to the television show. The idea of having someone watch TekWar and then walk through it on their computer was intriguing."

Though a few companies were interested in producing games based on TekWar, Capstone had a lot to offer. Determined to revitalize his company's reputation, Rothschild had already taken steps to ensure the quality of future projects. "We had already licensed the Build Engine from Apogee. I believe the Build Engine is the successor to the Doom engine," says Rothschild.

"When you've spent over one million dollars on the right engine, you don't want to waste it on a bad game."

"I was aware that CD-



THE PARTNERSHIP AND THE GAME

Though Capstone has not received critical appreciation for



through the games to show me what they do. I realize that my gaming skills are not as honed as they might be, but I've gone through a number of games."

Shatner says that *Myst* has left the most lasting impressions. "I loved the visuals and the air of mystery surrounding *Myst*. I love arcade games, but the aiming of guns and the shooting of objects is often too crude. There's no finesse."

"I'm becoming accustomed to what other people must think, but I'm coming to it latter-day."

"*TekWar* is an improvement. We've taken the existing technology and advanced it one more step. We've tried to combine the arcade concept and puzzles so it becomes an exercise for the mind as well as the fingers."



the vision of Capstone and Shatner. It is the vision of artists working in another arena and another medium, tackling the same subject."

As the game progressed, Shatner's dream of less violence expanded and became a defining element in the game. In *TekWar*, you travel streets filled with pedestrians and enemies. You can blast your way through the game, but the real goal is to arrest the TekLords (bosses), rather than to blast them into TekHeaven.

Even more central to the game is protecting civilians. Allowing pedestrians to be killed during an arrest initiates video sequences in which an angry Walter Bascom, played by William Shatner, threatens to send you to a cryogenic prison—"the Ice Tray."

"It's a fascinating experience given to very few people to have a mental image and to express it verbally and ultimately find it on the screen—not only the large screen but also the small screen," says Shatner. "Words cannot express the awe that experience brings."



JUDGING HIS GAME

Produced by Brandon Chamberlain, who has earned a strong reputation for his work with military simulations like *Harpoon*, *TekWar* went into beta test in July. Shatner has explored the game, but is anxious to see how it is viewed by consumers and the press.

"I've tried *Myst*. I've tried *Doom* and a lot of other games. When I say I've tried them, what I mean is that my resident expert is leading me



WHY THE FUTURE

During his 30-year career, Shatner has played cowboys, cops, even a turn-of-the-century Russian monk. Because of *Star Trek*, his name is inseparably connected with science fiction. Even so, given an entire universe of possible settings for his novels, Shatner decided to write about the future.

"Science fiction is a means of telling a story," says Shatner. "As somebody who works a great deal in science



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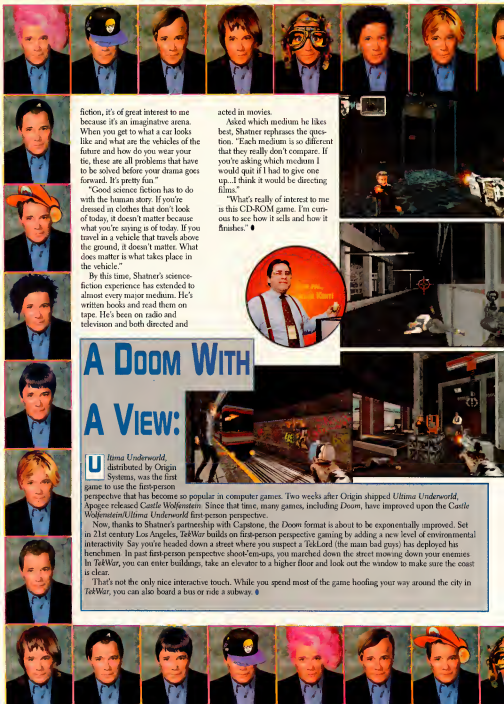
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fiction, it's of great interest to me because it's an imaginative arena. When you get to what a car looks like and what are the vehicles of the future and how do you wear your tie, these are all problems that have to be solved before your drama goes forward. It's pretty fun."

"Good science fiction has to do with the human story. If you're dressed in clothes that don't look of today, it doesn't matter because what you're saying is of today. If you travel in a vehicle that travels above the ground, it doesn't matter. What does matter is what takes place in the vehicle."

By this time, Shatner's science-fiction experience has extended to almost every major medium. He's written books and read them on tape. He's been on radio and television and both directed and

acted in movies.

Asked which medium he likes best, Shatner rephrases the question. "Each medium is so different that they really don't compare. If you're asking which medium I would quit if I had to give one up...I think it would be directing films."

"What's really of interest to me is this CD-ROM game. I'm curious to see how it sells and how it finishes." ■



A DOOM WITH A VIEW:

Ultima Underworld, distributed by Origin Systems, was the first game to use the first-person

perspective that has become so popular in computer games. Two weeks after Origin shipped *Ultima Underworld*, Apogee released *Castle Wolfenstein*. Since that time, many games, including *Doom*, have improved upon the *Castle Wolfenstein/Ultima Underworld* first-person perspective.

Now, thanks to Shatner's partnership with Capstone, the *Doom* format is about to be exponentially improved. Set in 21st century Los Angeles, *TekWar* builds on first-person perspective gaming by adding a new level of environmental interactivity. Say you're headed down a street where you suspect a *TekLord* (the main bad guys) has deployed his henchmen. In past first-person perspective shoot-'em-ups, you marched down the street mowing down your enemies. In *TekWar*, you can enter buildings, take an elevator to a higher floor and look out the window to make sure the coast is clear.

That's not the only nice interactive touch. While you spend most of the game hoofing your way around the city in *TekWar*, you can also board a bus or ride a subway. ■



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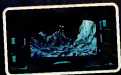
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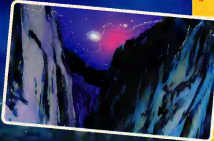
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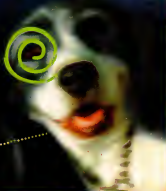
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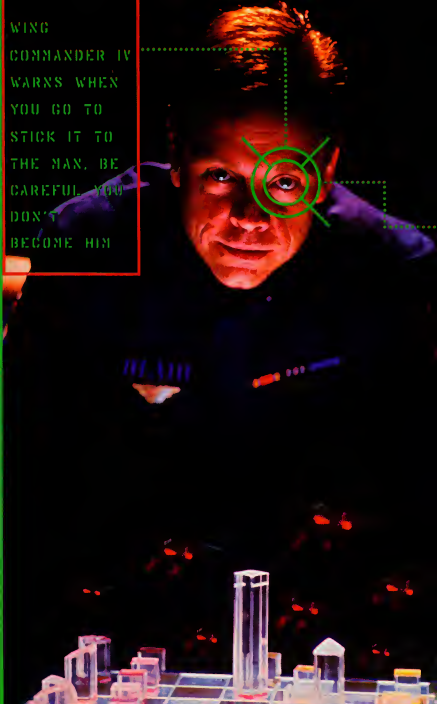


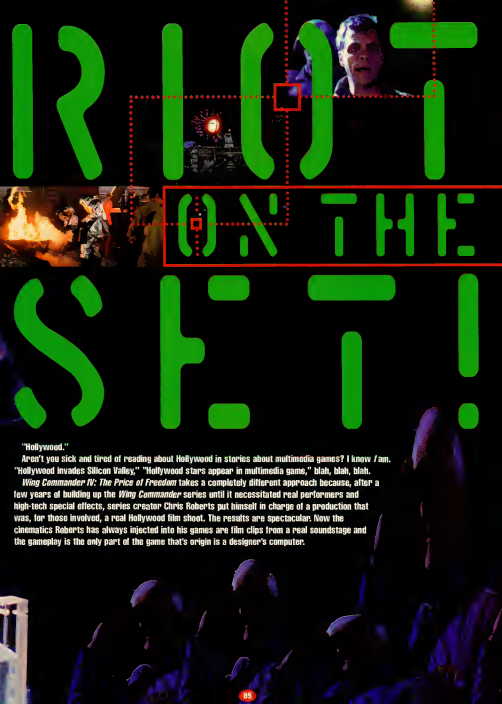
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BY RUSS CECCOLA





"Hollywood."

Aren't you sick and tired of reading about Hollywood in stories about multimedia games? I know I am. "Hollywood Invades Silicon Valley," "Hollywood stars appear in multimedia game," blah, blah, blah.

Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom takes a completely different approach because, after a few years of building up the *Wing Commander* series until it necessitated real performers and high-tech special effects, series creator Chris Roberts put himself in charge of a production that was, for those involved, a real Hollywood film shoot. The results are spectacular. Now the cinematics Roberts has always injected into his games are film clips from a real soundstage and the gameplay is the only part of the game that's origin is a designer's computer.



Throughout my visit to the set, four things proved constant among the conversations with the cast members. First, they all acknowledged that Roberts displayed great talent as a creative and open director, as good as any they worked with despite his status as a newcomer. They also had family members who went crazy when they heard about their appearance in a *Wing Commander* game. For example, the older brother of Holly Gagner (Sosa) and Wilson's nephew both got excited when they learned about their participation. Besides Jason Bernard (returning as Eisen), most of the actors didn't play computer games or even own computers. Although admittedly very much a video-game player, even Hamill never made the leap to purchase a home computer. Finally, the greatest compliment for the series and WCIV from the cast and crew was that nobody accepted the simulation's classification as a "game." Bernard commented, "I don't see it as a game—I see it as more of an experience. There are few CD-ROM games that are more than games. Under *A Killing Moon* and *SimCity 2000* are two examples, as is this one." This response most clearly illustrates the uniqueness of WCIV. Roberts has made a move



was fortunate to visit the game's shoot at the end of June and absorb as much about the production as I could in a typical 12-hour day. WCIV's sets, crew and cast spread out over Stages 6 through 9 at Ren-Mar Studios. That day, only Stage 8 was in use that day for scenes that take place in the command center of the BWS (Border Worlds System) Intrepid. Star Mark Hamill (Christopher Blair) was very committed to the project, as were all the cast and crew, because "the people who like this

game series are passionate about it." Tom Wilson (Maniac), the joker of the cast both in and out of the game, advised me that "a 12-hour day is delightful," whereas many days stretched to 15 or 16 hours. All this effort simply did not go to waste because the space combat game that's budget surpassed \$10 million (average for a TV movie) will undoubtedly top the sales charts for weeks after its release. *Wing Commander* fans enjoy the games for many different reasons, but sales of close to 1 million units for *Wing Commander III: The Heart of the Tiger* prove that they bought it in droves,



from which he can never step back, nor would he want to.

Fans of previous games in the series will be surprised to find that the familiar Kilrathi enemies are now almost entirely absent in WCIV. The focus of the game instead is the unrest of the Border Worlds and their desire for more representation in the Confederation, a situation that leads the galaxy to the brink of civil war. Blair has been called back into service to help avert a war by Admiral Tolwyn (Malcolm McDowell), the leader of the pilots throughout the series whose demeanor has changed considerably in this game. Hamill's take on the plot: "I was nervous since there was such a sense of closure in the last one that I wondered what they

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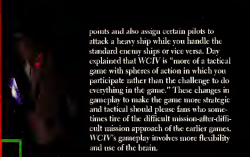




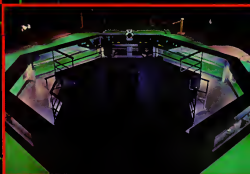
could do to justify another *Wing Commander*. If it's just another space combat game, it's not fair to the fans. I was really pleased that it wasn't a relaunch. It becomes more like a *Caine Mutiny* or *Crimson Tide* in political intrigue. There are factions that try to reignite the war to keep the military in power—just like real life. It's more like *A Few Good Men* than the same thing all over again. It's a gamble, but if it works, it will be very successful."

Wilson got serious for all of a minute to remark that "there are bigger decisions to be made—real decisions—because you're not choosing between good and evil, but you're choosing between shades of both.

You don't really know what's going to happen, which is a sign of a great movie." Surprises permeate the game, as I discovered first-hand when I examined the mission paths and game events on large art boards at the back of Stage 8. These elements



points and also assign certain pilots to attack a heavy ship while you handle the standard enemy ships or vice versa. Day explained that WCIV is "more of a tactical game with spheres of action in which you participate rather than the challenge to do everything in the game." These changes in gameplay to make the game more strategic and tactical should please fans who sometimes tire of the difficult mission-after-difficult mission approach of the earlier games. WCIV's gameplay involves more flexibility and use of the brain.



"I WONDERED WHAT THEY COULD DO TO JUSTIFY ANOTHER *WING COMMANDER*. IF IT'S JUST ANOTHER SPACE COMBAT GAME, IT'S NOT FAIR TO THE FANS."

-MARK HAMILL

mark the departure of WCIV from the semi-linearity of the previous games and require more heartfelt choices and difficult actions. Roberts outlined that "WCIV is a little grayer and a lot more interesting [than its predecessors]. It has better character development and much better integration of story with the way the gameplay works—more interactive choices." The story pits humans against

humans and the only Kilrathi (Melek) is an ally—or is he?

Roberts wears the most hats for the game's production because he acts as creator, writer, executive producer and director of the game's cinematics. Dallas Snell produced the gameplay, while Mark Day was the producer of the live-action scenes. Just like the past *Wing Commander* games, the cinematics set the tone for the missions and define the story. The gameplay itself is different for WCIV because you will be able to send off wingmen to other navigation

The game's story takes place over two weeks, but it took almost 10 weeks to shoot from May to July of 1995. The game gives more scenes to each of the characters and contains more cinematics overall. Origin and Roberts wanted to pack the experience with as much drama, intrigue and excitement as possible. Although it was easy to get lost on the big soundstages of WCIV, I could easily see that each was set up for a particular set of scenes. Stage 8 was used for the command center/briefing room of the *Intrepid*. Stage 7 was a construction area for the other sets. Stage 9 showcased a huge flight deck for an attack scene that involved pyrotechnics and lots of action. The most impressive of the sets was Stage 6, the setting for the senate chamber during the game's finale. It's an enormous set with intricate faux woodwork, a prominent podium and row upon row of benches for extras. Although there are only 10 or 15 main characters, some scenes will involve hundreds of extras.

The filming process itself does not differ radically from other movie shoots. Computer effects on the set are limited to monitor screens that greenscreens replace for the later addition of computer graphics. The technicians use an Avid offline editing system to splice the scenes and digitally store them. An Ultimatte workstation handles the blending of graphics and live shots. The main characters had stand-ins for setting up shots while they spent time learning

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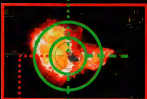
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their lines for the game's multiple paths from a huge script with over 400 scenes.

With so many long hours on the set, many of the cast members let loose between takes and really enjoyed the shoot. On the day of my visit, not only was it Friday, but it was also payday and tie/dress day. Many of the crew members strutted around in obnoxious ties as they happily received their pay stubs. Hamill particularly enjoyed himself at Ren-Mar: "Here I am at this studio again, it's a hot summer, I'm in this space gear—it's Wing Commander III all over again. It's fun to come to work. For example, Tom Wilson never fails to make me laugh. He's one of the all-time greats of comedy. I have to stop myself and make sure it's the way Blair would react to his lines instead of me—who might really find his lines funnier. That's what so wonderful about this whole production. We know that we're creating a product that's meant for fun and we're not taking ourselves too seriously. If you have fun, the audience will see that in your performance and have fun too."

Wilson never stops spouting jokes or amusing anecdotes. His take on the experience was that "if you get a lot of big lines like us on a soundstage, it's just going to be a lot of fun. It just shows that a goof-off like me can win in the end." Indeed! Wilson also revealed that he once shared a pad with Yakov Smirnoff and Andrew "Dice" Clay in the early '80s behind the Comedy



relax in your dressing room, there was not much down time—they just popped in another background. You're on-set much more than you would be in a conventional situation." Hamill also praised Roberts and explained why his position as director was so important: "You can't do any better than having the guy who created the whole thing right there. It's just new enough for him to spark my interest and it's just new enough

for me to do likewise for him."

Wilson reassured his feelings about the game industry: "The whole world of CD-ROM's is so foreign to me. Even after we did it [WCIII], I had no idea of the scope of the thing until I was mobbed by fans in malls. Within the past two years, CD-ROMs have become a totally visible arm of the entertainment industry. On Wing Commander III, they tried to reach into the entertainment world with actors, but now this is Hollywood all the way."

Bernard was "more amazed that it took so long" than the creativity of the process itself. Roberts explained his take on the production of his latest games and his original vision that has almost come full circle. "Before I started putting live-action into games, I wanted



to go off and shoot features. If you had said that I'd be directing Mark Hamill of Star Wars, one of my favorite films, back when we were working on the first Wing Commander, I would have told you that you were crazy." Roberts intentionally wrote the scenes for WCIV for soundstages

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Most of the people involved found the process for the creation of both WCIII and



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because "I like soundstages and sets—to construct things that don't exist—where there are no rules."

When I walked through the sets of WCIV, the level of professionalism and detail really impressed me because I, like many others, remembered being totally captivated by the cinematics of the first scenes in the first *Wing Commander*. Now, the character that you controlled who was affectionately referred to as "blue hair" has evolved into Blair, portrayed by one of the most familiar faces in science fiction

likes "games that make you think—that get you really involved." Although his son is better at WCIII than he, Bernard soundly beats him with *SinCity 2000* construction projects. Bernard, most recently seen as the stern boss in *Herman's Head* on FOX, confessed that he's a major fan of the original *Star Trek* series, which creates a healthy rivalry with Roberts—who prefers the *Star Wars* saga to the television phenomenon. Bernard was especially pleased that they changed the uniforms between games, although he wished Eisen had received a

Dekker who helps the flyboys in WCIV, which is not a great stretch for him since he's an ex-Marine. He played a Russian in *Stargate's* 1918: *Flying Aces* against blue-screen backgrounds but found WCIV to be "almost better than film." He met Chris Roberts at a party in Austin before the filming of the game. Although he is now a part of a spectacular multimedia production, he admitted that "I don't have a computer. I deal with the phone well—that's about it."

Although Chris Roberts originally intended to shoot both a feature film and a game simultaneously with WCIV, those plans were put on hold until the next game. "In the future, you'll see more production values, but the only way to do that and make economic sense will be to do a feature at the same time," he said. "Realism sometimes gets in the way of fun—I like to concentrate on the fun. I like creating stuff and have always been visually driven, so as long as I can keep on making experiences for people, I'll be happy." He finds the in-between steps of the design process some-



(Hamill, of course). WCIV's shoot was busy and productive, although one of the most popular places on the set was the craft services table. Believe everything you read about these things. The craft services folks had fresh food and snacks put out all day long and covered all bases, as well as serving a delicious lunch and dessert. Wilson commented only half-jokingly that "the most important part of moviemaking is snacks."

Each of the main actors brings years of unique experiences and talents to WCIV. They all revealed elements of their lives or views that relate to both the game's production and their take on the multimedia market. Hamill mentioned: "One aspect of the game that really spoke to me in a way that I can relate to in everyday life is that Blair finally achieved that lifelong dream. In my case, if I ever got fed up with show business, I always imagined opening up a little playhouse. In Blair's case, his life's blood is that cockpit, where he can be entirely in control of his own little area of the world." He also surprisingly said that "I love being around movies, but I don't necessarily feel like I need to be in front of it, with the curtain call." He gets off on the atmosphere of sets. Perhaps the reason behind these feelings is his past, in which he was involved in every aspect of movies early in his career, from lights to construction. His latest project is *The Black Pearl*, a five-part graphic novel from Dark Horse created with his writing partner Eric Johnson, scheduled for the summer of 1996.

Bernard, the biggest gamer of the bunch,



promotion. His latest film, *Sophie and the Moonlander*, is "so special to me like the filming of *Wing Commander III*" that he proudly announced that it was both the best part and the most incredible experience on a film that he's had.

Gagnier, whose sassy Sosa wears glasses like she does in real life and also chews gum continuously, calls herself the "techno-nerd" of the command center. She acts as the top decoder for the crew and even gets a love interest in *Catscratch* (Mark Dacascos). She commented that the role of Sosa was "fun because I've never gotten to play this kind of part. The game has a lot of integrity. It is something I can have my nieces watch and be proud of. It has a lot of good principles in it and a little bit of something for everybody. There really is no distinction between the roles of men and women in the game's future." Jeremy Roberts plays the tough veteran named

times tedious, but the end result is worth all the effort. Although his next projects will be a fantasy game and then another Privateer title, Roberts expects to get back to the *Wing Commander* series soon and shoot a movie/game that will perhaps take place back in time during the war with the Kilathi when those furry creatures were still roaming through space looking for humans to kill.

Chris Roberts and Origin clearly took brave new steps toward a bright future for the *Wing Commander* series with the production of WCIV. The important thing is that they did it right, from the professionally-built sets and camera equipment to the rehearsals and intense drama. In short, they had fun and produced a game that will be fun to play. As WCIV's main star, Mark Hamill, so eloquently put it: "After all, we're just grownups in funny costumes saying wonderful lines." ■

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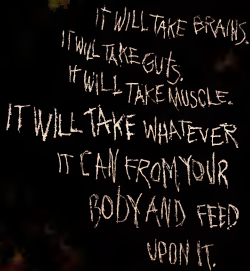
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26

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THE NET

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by John Wesley Hardin



SPECIAL ONLINE EVENTS

Here are two things that William Gibson probably never anticipated when he envisioned cyberspace: cybersex and the explosion of free enterprise online. Sure, Gibson saw the Net populated by big business, and cyberspace is a bastion of capitalism. But it's far grittier than his stark world filled with galaxies of abstract information. The Internet today is crowded, easy and mostly low rent, thanks to the World Wide Web.

Fortunately for small companies, it's possible to create a slick-looking online presence without an army of programmers and servers. You may be a dog groomer working out of your basement, but you can look bigger than Microsoft if you really know your HTML, or can pay some-

one who does. And there are plenty of companies willing to do it for you.

Right now, commerce online is in an experimental phase. People and products are finding their niches in the net, or discovering new ones. Companies are willing to take chances because there is relatively little to lose.

"The entire consumer

online service industry is about \$2 billion, and only a fraction of that is shopping," says Richard Spence, analyst and online strategist with DataQuest systems. "Compare that to Wal-Mart, which does \$86 billion a year. Right now it's really just a speck of dust in the retail world."

True, but not obvious when one looks at the Net. There are more than 23,000 sites listed in the Yahoo business directory alone. It seems like every other web site is an ad or has an ad in it. Non-commercial sites often have links or files about one company or another.

Even companies who aren't actually selling anything online are advertising there. "It's so cost-effective that you should be advertising online if you're not," says Metzger Associates' Director of New Media Bret Clement. Metzger, a Denver PR firm, has a WWWeb site featuring an ongoing soap opera that highlights the company's clients. "We're spending under a hundred dollars a week on our web page," Clement says. "In terms of publicity budgets, that's nothing."



Mike Homer, Netscape Communications vice president of Marketing, confirms it: "Most of the money being made on the Internet is in advertising space."

Fortunately, not everyone in the world is hawking beer, blue jeans and minivans (or, even more boring, servers and computing solutions). There is almost every kind of service and merchandise available online. "Fringe" items, like Bondage and Discipline paraphernalia, are big online, where skittish middlemen aren't a problem and the market is ripe; the typical online consumer is above average in education, above average in salary and predominantly male.

"Computer equipment and adult items are the big sellers online right now," says

Spence, Media Circus'

Joe Butt reports,

"Anything to do with high



technology sells. Shopping on the Internet has passed being trendy."

Shopping on the Internet may be beyond trendy now, but the Internet itself still has a lot of "underground" cache, which may explain the

growing number of Internet Cafes around the globe. Now, it's actually cool to hang out in a public place and work on a computer. To all computer nerds and Net geeks: You've come a long way, baby.

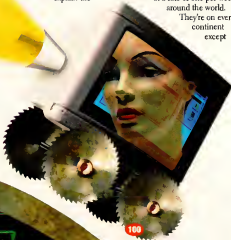
New cybercafes are opening at a rate of one per week around the world.

They're on every continent except

Antarctica, with more than 50 in the U.S. alone. Is this just a passing fad? Joe Kendall is the owner of one of the newest, the Cyber City Cafe in Las Vegas, Nev. (<http://www.cybercity-cafe.com>). He has a stake in this not being just a trend. "I think this is here to stay. It's similar to the cafes of the '60s, but grown up. We're getting more people involved in the Internet, and the rest of the world, and the information that is out there."

That's a noble goal, but what happens when everyone becomes familiar with the Internet, what role will cybercafes take? "They'll let people who don't have computers have access to the Net, and interact with other people at the same time. There's always new generations of people coming into the computer scene." A comprehensive, regularly updated list of cybercafes can be found at (<http://www.easynet.co.uk/pages/cafe/c06.htm>).

Publishing is an industry that is



being totally overwhelmed by the online boom. When you can sell your magazine directly to the reader, you eliminate the printers, the distributors and all the other middlemen. Corey Friedman, vice president, associate publisher of Omni Magazine and vice president, associate publisher of Online Services, describes how *Penthouse* online (<http://www.penthousemag.com>) made the industry sit up and take notice.

"*Penthouse* debuted back in March. Right off the bat, with no promotion, it got 802,000 hits, and now we're at 2.9 million hits a day. I'm not saying new media is taking the place of print, but what you can do online is very different from what you can do in print."

Like the other men's magazines online, *Penthouse* has a free area, open to the web at large, where netters can ogle naked ladies and read excerpts from the magazine (yeah, sure), and a pay service. "*Penthouse* has a pay tier called the Private Collection where you pay for Bob Guccione's archival photographs and things of that nature. The user calls an 800 number, they get a personal identification number with access to the collection."

Doubtless that all the magazines are looking for ways to make the Net pay. "With *Penthouse*, on the advertising side, we're going to sell hyperlinks to different advertisers. There's a lot of things we're exploring right now, a lot of things we're putting together to really give the advertiser a smorgasbord of options."

Indeed, after a long cruise on the Net, it looks like a feeding frenzy. In many corners, Net vets can be heard grumbling for the good old days when commercial interests on the Net were forbidden. "Those days are gone, gone, gone," lamented one newsgroup poster. "The

frontier is commercialized, and the noise of cyberspace is the sound of cash registers."

According to Joe Kendall, though, that kind of gloom is an overreaction. "Commerce on the Internet doesn't take away from what the Internet is supposed to

be, because you'll always have an underground in the Internet."

Undeniably, if the Net lost its subversive elements, it would cease to be the Net. Freedom of expression is as integral to it as computers. No one is saying what form the mixture of explod-

ing commerce and exploding expression will take, but we can be sure that it will surpass the guesses of science fiction. Welcome to Tomorrow; will this be cash or credit? ♦ —Additional reporting by Ross Chamberlain, Arnie Katz and Mary Waldie.

HACK NETSCAPE

Sometimes it's hard to tell who your friends are in cyberspace. In September, Netscape Communications got a friendly favor it probably didn't want. Two cypherpunks (advocates of strong privacy and encryption online) hacked a supposedly secure Netscape transaction and members of the cypherpunk community immediately publicized the security breach.

Community Connexion, a privacy server and Internet Service Provider in Berkeley, Calif., started the Hack Netscape contest the next day (<http://www.e2.org/hacknetscape>), "as an incentive to the Net to expose security flaws in software that is advertised as secure." Sameer Parekh, Community Connexion's owner and founder, is offering a custom-designed T-shirt to anyone who proves they hacked Netscape: "It's in the Net's best interest for Netscape to have good security," says Parekh. "I sincerely hope that the next time someone finds a hole in Netscape, that it is someone who would rather win a free T-shirt than steal lots of money." Parekh's interest was piqued a month ago when cypherpunk Hal Finney challenged the cypherpunk community to decrypt a communication he made with an export version of a secure Netscape server. Because of trade laws restricting the export of encryption software, the export software's encryption isn't as strong as the domestic version. "It took two separate groups of people about two weeks each to crack it using brute-force techniques," says Parekh. "That first attack showed how the crippled (export) version wasn't really very effective in protecting people's privacy. A second challenge was issued, which was cracked in 31 hours in a distributed attempt by hundreds of people on the Internet." Because of the export restrictions, "the first two hacks should not be construed in any way to be disparaging to Netscape Communications Corp."

According to the Hack Netscape page, though, this latest hack is the result of sloppy programming at Netscape. Graduate students Ian Goldberg and David Wagner discovered a not-quite-random-enough random number generator in Netscape's encryption. "Ian and David's attack took 25 seconds to determine the key used by Netscape Navigator for subsequent encryption" claims the Hack Netscape page. "This hack is indicative of the flaws inherent in releasing cryptography code without a publicly available source code." Many cypherpunks have been critical of Netscape's refusal to allow cryptography experts to examine their source code.

Overall, Parekh says Netscape has reacted very positively to the Hack Netscape challenge. "I put the page (detailing the latest hack) up on Monday, and their response came on Tuesday morning." In their reply, Netscape announced a fix for the insecure code, and Phil Karlton of Netscape has been quoted as saying that he will shave his head if the new code is easily cracked. Says Parekh, "the fact that they responded within two days of the problem being revealed speaks well of their responsiveness to the Net. Very many other software vendors have not been so quick in dealing with security problems in their software."

The Hack Netscape contest will continue, but no more T-shirts await brute-force attacks. Says Sameer, "as other programs become popular, we'll have specific contests for them, and we welcome proof of hacks on other programs that advertise themselves as secure." ♦



WAR

IS HELL. BUT ONLY IF IT'S DONE

RIGHT.



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free in the dark—without being observed. War surplus telescopes M-2, Gov't. cost about \$1200. Instrument complete, ready to be mounted, these telescopes, from the U.S. Army, are available for sale.

CULTURE SHOCK

IMPARTIAL REVIEWS OF THE LATEST IN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT

STRANGER THAN FICTION

Pulp Fiction redefines film noir

Now then, a filmmaker comes along who's willing to test the conventional boundaries of human sensibilities

Quentin Tarantino is more like the guy smuggling immigrants across the border, and *Pulp Fiction* is his greatest cargo to date.

Pulp Fiction is the latest in a retinue of violent and disturbing films from writer-director Tarantino: following *Reservoir Dogs*, *True Romance* and *Natural Born Killers*. Tarantino is comfortable amid the gore he splatters on the screen. Considering *Pulp Fiction*'s runaway success, why shouldn't he be?

"Three stories... About one story..." is the phrase used to introduce the screenplay Tarantino co-scripted with Roger Avery. The title suggests the film is a tribute to the turn-of-the-century magazines, which the era's blossoming adolescents kept hidden between their mattresses. These "pulp" didn't muffle the grim realities with suggestive sexual innuendo or tales of heroism. No, their beauty was the sheer honest telling of blood-letting and steamy nights.

Tarantino's "tribute" is much more than a revival, though. He's updated last year's action hero and last century's hard-boiled detectives. He's clothed today's heroes in the guises of hit men like Vincent Vega (John Travolta) and Jules

(Samuel L. Jackson). Even Butch (Bruce Willis), a boxer who double-crosses gangster Marsellus Wallace (Ving Rhames), is nothing more than a self-styled

standable, considering Mia is Marsellus' wife.

Following the piercing eventfulness of the date's outcome, the scene flashes back to a young Butch and Captain Koons (Christopher Walken).

Koons has returned from the war with a gift from Butch's dead father. Most folks would probably pass on the gift after Koons relates the tale of how he smuggled it through a P.O.W.

camp, but Butch develops a fondness for the watch that will lead him to risk his life for "this uncomfortable hunk of metal."

as the film concludes. Finding only three stories in the midst of all this must require a higher understanding of chaos theory.

Pulp Fiction's simplicity stems from perhaps the greatest examples of dialogue and soliloquy working in sync since Shakespeare. Actors are attracted to Tarantino's characters for this very reason.

The action genre has taken mass carnage to the point of trivialization, but Tarantino's films actually ridicule the reality of these horrors. As an example, after Vincent accidentally shoots a passenger in the face when their car lurches

bumap, Jules calls the Wolf (Harvey Keitel) for a little upholstery cleaning advice. Scenes like these are standard fare in *Pulp Fiction*, and these affronts to human sensibilities are somehow entertaining. Now that the picture is in video stores,

we can once again keep our social decency between our mattresses and away from the eyes of concerned Republicans.

—John Bern



Robin Hood running desperately for his life.

The aforementioned "three stories" seems misleading. There is a lot more going on than Tarantino lets on, as the film views more like a dozen stories made up of even more scenes. Pumpkin (Tim Roth) and Honey Bunny (Amanda Plummer) lead off with a discussion detailing the finer arts of armed robbery. As the tension builds, the audience finds themselves sitting in a car between Vincent and Jules on their way to perform a hit on some unfortunate frat boys who mistakenly cheated Marsellus.

Things calm down for a while after Vincent makes an appointment to see his heroin connection, Lance (Eric Stoltz). He apparently needs to get high before picking up Mia (Uma Thurman) for their "date." His anxiety is under-



Vincent and Butch meet briefly once or twice in the film, and both Vincent and Jules join Honey Bunny and Pumpkin for a cup of coffee

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CULTURE SHOCK

HEAVY metal

Now everyone who felt stymied by Activision's recent release of the long-awaited *MechWarrior 2* in PC CD-ROM format has an outlet for their aggression: *MechWarrior 3050* has arrived for the SNES. Players control huge BattleMechs in this mission-based action simulation—think of *MechWarrior 3050* as a mini-*MechWarrior 2* and you'll be on the right track. However, you'll find this game carries none of the combat complexities of its big brother.

The object of the game is to defeat the members of the Inner Sphere faction with your "Madcat Heavy

OmniMech," in order to reunite the Mech Clans under a single leader. The "Madcat" Mech is equipped with three types of weapons: heavy, tactical and main gun—each with three weapons per category. The best weapons to use are directly affected by the mission goals and terrain, so only experienced players will be able to complete a successful mission without some experimentation. You control

both the OmniMech's movement and attacks with the controller, but two players can separate those functions for a more enjoyable experience. The missions themselves are difficult, but aren't altogether unreasonable.

MechWarrior 3050 demonstrates that you don't have to simulate every single, little function and mode to enjoy boyish

BattleTech-type fun.
—Russ Crecola

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Activision
- SYSTEM: SNES
- THEME: Strategy/Adventure
- HD SPACE: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1 ■ LEVELS: N/A

12345

YOU CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC

HALF-COCKED

★★★

Unwound
Slant 6
Rodan
Salmon Skin
Sleepyhead
Ruby Falls
Freakwater
Versus

★★

Half-Cocked: The Motion Picture Soundtrack

■ Matador Records

12345

Helium
Dungbeats
The Grifters

★★

Movie soundtracks are a strange breed. Ever since the *Singles* soundtrack (which sold phenomenally well and featured songs by Smashing Pumpkins, Pearl Jam and Soundgarden), movie producers have struggled to assemble a soundtrack, not that invokes the mood of a film, but that is filled with radio-friendly songs that serve as an aural ad.

Half-Cocked, an independent film that has yet to find nationwide release, is a rock 'n' roll story in the spirit of the Beatles' *Help*. The point of *Half-Cocked*, and other films of that genre, is simply the music. Set in Louisville, Nashville and Chattanooga, the film revolves

around five down-and-out twentysomethings who steal a van full of music equipment and hit the road as an indie-rock band. This shoe-string-budget film found director Suki Hawley recruiting a number of friends to round out the cast (who just happened to be members of indie-rock bands Rodan, Crain, Ruby Falls and The Grifters).

The film is filled with one of the best representations of the current American musical underground and the soundtrack is one of the best compilations in recent memory. Featuring stellar tracks by Sleepyhead, Helium, Polvo and Slant 6, *Half-Cocked* captures the sound of America's youth, circa 1995, searching for a voice and more importantly, a means to be heard.

—Garriek Schwitt

This is a Ghost Text

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CULTURE SHOCK

EVERYTHING

ZEN?

I DON'T THINK SO!

It came the photograph, then the music video, then the CD and now music has made the leap to interactive multimedia. Little ground has been broken in the form, but Bush, riding their multiplatinum hit-filled debut LP *Sixteen Stone*, have taken it upon themselves to test technology's uncharted waters with a CD-ROM. The result is a nifty bit of technology billed as a CD-Plus. The rather ordinary-looking compact disc allows you to listen to its three audio tracks *Little Things*, *Live* and *Bud* on any old hi-fi system. But put that same disc into your CD-ROM drive, and you can become completely interactive with the members of Bush.

For techno-savvy Bush fans, the *Little Things Enhanced CD* is a steal for its \$12.98 price. Divided into six sections, the CD-ROM is packed with music, videos, live footage and interviews. The first section, titled "Jukebox," allows the user to sample every song on *Sixteen Stone* with accompanying videos, live versions and printed lyrics. Want to know more about *Everything Zen*? Just click on the "Story" icon and get a digitized clip of frontman Gavin Rossdale's thoughts on the single.

After going through the "Jukebox," one can go to the "Video Play" section and play memory games. Or, if memory games aren't your thing, click on "On the Road," where the user finds him or herself exploring the band's tour bus and checking out their guitars and private possessions. After checking out the bus, one can then hang with the band at a backstage soundcheck, which culminates in the rather mundane opportunity to play a drum solo on Robin Codrington's drums.

Tired of getting the band's thoughts of life on the road, one can click on "0,1,0,1,0,0," which provides the viewer with random samples of songs and videos. As an added bonus, if the Enhanced CD isn't enough to quench your appetite for Bush, preview the "under construction" Bush web site and log-on information.

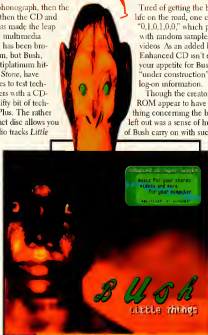
Though the creators of the Bush CD-ROM appear to have thought of everything concerning the band, one thing they left out was a sense of humor. The members of Bush carry on with such a strict sense of

"artistic seriousness" that they come off as comic. Clicking on the "Profiles" section, which features clips of the members speaking to the user, fails to reveal much about the band members or their music—and casts the band in a ridiculously *Spinal Tap* manner through its relentless solemnity.

The problem with the *Little Things Enhanced CD* is that the creators at Trauma Records have

completely overlooked what has made Bush so popular. In a nutshell, Bush writes heavy punk-pop songs that are filled with both menace and ridiculously catchy and unforgettable melodies. With hits like *Everything Zen*, *Little Things* and *Comedown*, the band has made a name for itself by crafting infectious rock 'n' roll. But when a band as sonically powerful as Bush are reduced to tiny images on a computer monitor, they immediately lose all credibility. *The Little Things Enhanced CD* is at times interesting, entertaining, boring and naively comical.

—Carnet Schmitt



Bush: Little Things Enhanced CD

- Trauma Records
- Mac/Windows

17345

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SEGA
SATURN

PC CD-ROM



CULTURE SHOCK

Struck by the Blues

Blue Lightning adds no spark to the Jaguar CD

The mercenary fighter pilot is a fantasy, violating the laws of economics just as surely as 18-foot-4-11, flying robots violate the laws of physics. Jet fighters are so expensive to purchase and maintain that it takes the resources of governments to keep them, and it's doubtful that governments would let such a destabilizing force as air power to stay in the hands of mercenaries. No matter, because the lure of piloting a jet is apparently as powerful as the urge to own a 100-foot-tall, flying robot.

Blue Lightning puts the player in the pilot's seat with a mercenary fighter group of the same name. There's bad guy named Draco who your team must put down before he (saw) takes over the world. To this end, there are several different aircraft the pilot can fly; all the expected aircraft are here from A-10 tank killers to F-14 Tomcats, all nicely modeled in cut-scenes and gameplay. That's the extent of nice things about the gameplay. The copyright dates give a clue to the problem.

Blue Lightning was originally designed in 1989, for the Atari Lynx hand-held system. On that platform, it was considered probably the best action game to ever appear on a hand-held system. Unfortunately, it just doesn't make a good game for a CD system in 1995. If those guys at Atari think this game will help them compete against the PSN, Saturn and Ultra 64, they're nuts. —John Wesley Hardin

TECH SPECS

- Publisher: Atari
- System: Jaguar CD
- Theme: Action/ Arcade
- Megabits: 32
- Players: 1
- Levels: N/A

12345

DEATH FROM ABOVE

THE U.S. ARMY doesn't take too kindly to regular folk like you and me who want to joy-ride in one of their expensive helicopters, knocking out targets of opportunity. If this is your gig though, Interactive Magic has the ticket. Apache seats you in the cockpit of one of the most destructive and versatile whirlybirds Uncle Sam has to offer, the Apache AH-64D Longbow. The Longbow served as a workhorse chopper during the Gulf War. Its advanced radar and night vision weaponry made it a good choice to fly in the dark and under bad weather conditions.

Apache thrusts you into a detailed 3-D world where it's kill or be killed. Unlike many flight sims that prelate everything when you get too close, Apache uses a custom polygon-based graphics engine that delivers realistic shaded terrain, aircraft, ships and ground targets. Once in the air, you are treated to a target-rich environment that's on par with EA's U.S. Navy Fighters, but with a little less detail and a slightly better frame rate. Don't get too excited yet, as Apache, like USNF, requires at least a Pentium to crank up all the detail and have the game run smoothly.

For the hard-core sim lovers, there is enough complexity in the flight controls and radar modes to keep you busy, but a casual player can easily ignore this and fly around and kill stuff with the wide palate of weaponry available.

There is an Arcade Flight Mode that keeps flying simple, but after a while you will want all the woosie stuff off, and opt for the Realistic Mode. This gives you more precise, 360-degree control of the chopper. This means you can execute a loop de loop or in a last-ditch act of desperation, turn the ol' Apache belly-up for a full-on, blade-first suicide attack into whatever needs to die.

Apache offers a good bang for the buck: You can fly a variety of missions including strike, escort, rescue and tank-busting either as single missions or by enlisting in a detailed campaign. If you work somewhere with a network, and a boss that doesn't keep track of what you do, there's even an option that supports up to 16 players! If you have a cyberspace band buddy, a modem option lets you battle head-to-head, team up as wingmen or pilot the same chopper where one's a flyin' and one's a shootin'. —Mike Stassus

TECH SPECS

- Publisher: Interactive Magic
- System: PC Dns
- Theme: Flight Sim
- Megabits: 5
- Players: 1
- Levels: N/A

12345

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CULTURE SHOCK

Now It's Time **art** We Make

Interactive art CD-ROM with just a hint of *Sprockets*



ell at art," this CD-ROM commands. Yes, Vide Mecum's *Die Veteranen* [The Veterans] encourages the user to "begin by disobeying rules." The idea of yelling at art probably hasn't occurred to all that many people, except maybe crying out in boredom.

In order to combat the stodginess of the art world, a group of artists based in Leipzig, Germany, have created *Die Veteranen*. They've combined their talents to incorporate interactive technology into the experience of art, giving the viewer an opportunity to manipulate instead of just experience. In essence, the viewer becomes the artist.

In practice, DV is sort of an artistic exploration. The ability to manipulate the various exhibits that you are presented with is limited; how the user is able to alter the exhibit is the choice of the artist. Being a structured interaction, you're not going to be able to do anything really wicked, like throw acid on a painting or tear the canvas from the frame and wear it like a dress.

Accepting some inherent difficulty in realizing total interaction, DV is still quite interesting. There are tons of things to find in

each section, and there's a real sense of discovery when the user finds a new way to interact.

DV also does a good job of blurring the lines between different art forms. Poetry can be explored visually, accompanied by appropriate images and an ambient soundtrack. One particular poem is supplemented by movable color blocks, allowing the user to gain new insights into the artist's intention. And you really do get to yell at art, affecting the outcome of a bullfight through a microphone hooked up to your soundcard.

The documentation is almost entirely in German, but that's not much of a problem. This is something to be explored with an open mind, and a basic lack of guidance serves it well. It might take some guesswork on occasion,

but that's a good part of the fun.

Those who feel that art in general is, well, pompous, probably won't have a change of heart upon experiencing this. But those with even a passing interest in artistic expression will find this to be a fairly engaging new take on old ideas. —Ed Finkler



Die Veteranen
(The Veterans)

■ Vide Mecum Publishing
■ Mac/Windows

12345

UGLY IS SIN

Artist and writer Ted McKeever has been something of an anomaly in the world of comics. Rarely has someone with such a distinctively weird style (at times looking like a primitive wood cut) managed to make his way into the world of mainstream comic-book entertainment. Over the years, McKeever has provided his unique vision to such corporate-owned creations as Batman,

the Spectre and Eclipso, always with strange but ultimately interesting results.

Now, with *Industrial Gothic*, McKeever is let loose to create a new world where beauty is the law, and the ugly are imprisoned. In the first issue, Pencil, one of the lifetime prisoners, has stumbled onto a legend of sorts—a place called the Aluminum Tower where the ugly can find sanctuary in the real world. Pencil, his armless and legless lover Nickie, and a group of other misfits decide to take the risk and attempt to escape their prison.

While it's a cautionary tale for a world that

seems to be plummeting constantly toward surface without depth, ultimately it ends up acting as an ode for the soul of mankind. Even in our worst moments, even when we don't know it, there are those who always attempt to rise up against great odds and find truth and happiness. Even if Pencil and Nickie fail, McKeever has already

suggested they won't be the last.

For being such a weird-ass artist, McKeever has created a nice little nightmare vision with a silver lining begging to be shown. —Frank Kurtz



Industrial Gothic #1

■ DC Comics/Variety
■ Story & Art by Ted McKeever
■ Monthly, Five-issue series

12345

SONY



wipeout

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- Totally killer graphics



CULTURE SHOCK

Earthworm Jim Hooks Next Adventure

Baited Breath:

You gotta
have
heart

It's not often that a video game is so much fun to play as it is to watch. But *Earthworm Jim* is one of those rare games that is both a pleasure to play and a pleasure to watch. The game is a platformer, but it's not like the ones you've played before. It's a platformer with a twist. It's a platformer with a heart.

Jim is a worm who can talk, think, and feel. He's got a big heart and a big head. He's got a big personality and a big sense of humor. He's got a big sense of adventure and a big sense of style. He's got a big sense of fun and a big sense of life. He's got a big sense of love and a big sense of peace. He's got a big sense of joy and a big sense of happiness. He's got a big sense of hope and a big sense of faith. He's got a big sense of courage and a big sense of strength. He's got a big sense of wisdom and a big sense of knowledge. He's got a big sense of power and a big sense of influence. He's got a big sense of respect and a big sense of honor. He's got a big sense of dignity and a big sense of pride. He's got a big sense of self and a big sense of soul.

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Playmates Interactive Entertainment
- SYSTEM: Genesis
- THEME: Action
- MEGABITS: 24
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: 24

tion like humorist P.G. Wodehouse's *Empress of Blandings*—but down-in-the-road, truffle-grubbing

as currying favor with the king. Jim is a worm who can talk, think, and feel. He's got a big heart and a big head. He's got a big personality and a big sense of humor. He's got a big sense of adventure and a big sense of style. He's got a big sense of fun and a big sense of life. He's got a big sense of love and a big sense of peace. He's got a big sense of joy and a big sense of happiness. He's got a big sense of hope and a big sense of faith. He's got a big sense of courage and a big sense of strength. He's got a big sense of wisdom and a big sense of knowledge. He's got a big sense of power and a big sense of influence. He's got a big sense of respect and a big sense of honor. He's got a big sense of dignity and a big sense of pride. He's got a big sense of self and a big sense of soul.

from above and if they hit, they send Jim's elevator back to start. For the first dozen times or so, the game is a little bit like a platformer. But then, it's not. It's a platformer with a twist. It's a platformer with a heart. It's a platformer with a big sense of fun and a big sense of life. It's a platformer with a big sense of love and a big sense of peace. It's a platformer with a big sense of joy and a big sense of happiness. It's a platformer with a big sense of hope and a big sense of faith. It's a platformer with a big sense of courage and a big sense of strength. It's a platformer with a big sense of wisdom and a big sense of knowledge. It's a platformer with a big sense of power and a big sense of influence. It's a platformer with a big sense of respect and a big sense of honor. It's a platformer with a big sense of dignity and a big sense of pride. It's a platformer with a big sense of self and a big sense of soul.

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—Neil Shapiro

LOUD

AS THEY WANT TO BE

Borrowing throaty vocals from the gods of '70s cock rock (Aerosmith), the power trio Load Lacy embrace traditional guitar-based rock 'n' roll philosophies planted in a moist soil and compost to ensure firm root growth.

RULING THE SKIES

Wing Arms

to the Saturn

brings flight combat

WING ARMS

- PUBLISHER: Sega
 - SYSTEM: Saturn
 - THEME: Flight Sim
 - MEGABITS: 32
 - PLAYERS: 1
 - LEVELS: N/A
- 60% Complete



o, this is not the home version of Sega's coin-op, *Wing War*; it is, instead, a stunning new combat-based flight sim focusing on WWII-era prop-driven technology. Select either a cockpit-based perspective or a behind-the-plane POV, with 18 aircraft types, seven of which are available to gamers (bet on special codes for the rest).

Wing Arms boasts first-rate graphics, a great

opening cut scene, and a pulse-pounding martial score. There's even some excellent use of the "lens flare" visual effect—dots of sunshine reflected off the gamer's windshield.

This incomplete version does have some problems: Planes bounce off both water and land, sustaining only minor damage even after a full-speed crash landing on an atoll, and the NovaLogic-style ravine-chase sequences look shabby. But the amazing enemy AI and smooth play mask this as a sureshot leader among next-gen console flight sims.

—Bill Kunkel

LOUD LUCY

- Breathe
- DGC (Geffen)

12:45

some solid guitar riffin'. The always potent and up-front guitar and vocal stylings are anything but weak and manage to add the personality element to the band's semiretro sound. Most of the songs exploit the garnet of musical dynamics. You know, loud to quiet, quiet to loud, etc.

Their most sellable single *Over me* smacks of the kind of juice needed to slay the fickle MTV generation. It's filled with a memorable melody line fortified with a healthy heap of angst and reflection.

Not here is another that holds its own on the CD mostly due to tight harmony and simple themes of love. No shortage of energy to be found in the song at all. To put it in layman's terms, "It rocks dude."

There are not too many things I can say against this CD, except at times Lane's voice seemed a bit forced and a little on the contrived side, otherwise it's a good listen.

—Dean Hager

loud lucy

BREATHE

Loud Lucy's *Breathe* will appeal to folks who enjoy the simple things in life; fast cars, loud guitar and easy-to-figure lyrics. Rock on whoooooo! It's not really that ill conceived, but it does echo the foundation of what rock was and is built on; still the music holds true to the grunge revolution. Nothing to be ashamed of kids, not at all.

Singer-songwriter Christian Lane serves up simple, powerful hooks coupled with

9 OUT OF 10

PSYCHOL-
OGISTS

ReCOMMEND

LOADED

FOR

PATIENTS

With a

SEVERE

CASE

OF

ITCHY

TRIGGER

FINGER

CULTURE SHOCK



WHATCHA' GONNA DO?

**Virtua
Cop
busts
the gun
game
genre**

Sega shows off its hot, new Saturn OS with one of the most impressive games ever to appear on a home TV screen. Even in unfinished form the Saturn version of Virtua Cop looks like a lock for Game of the Year.

A light gun target contest in the tradition of Konami's *Lethal Enforcers*, this game represents a quantum leap beyond any previous entry in this genre. Much as *Virtua Fighter* took the flat, 2-D fighting game and gave it visual depth, *Virtua Cop* reinvents video gun games. The "camera" moves constantly as cars explode, hostages flee, and bad guys tumble off rooftops. Even "Justice

Shots" are reproduced, in which the player harmlessly disarms a bad guy. And, like *Virtua Fighter*, there is no blood; just intense, eyeball-popping action.

Most amazing of all, the game plays just as well with a standard controller as it does with the Sega Light Gun. In short, *Virtua Cop* puts every other console gun game up against the virtual wall and pulls the trigger.

—Bill Kunkel

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Sega
- SYSTEM: Saturn
- THEME: Target
- MEGABITS: 32
- PLAYERS: 1-2
- LEVELS: N/A
- 33% Complete

The fact that U2 chose an Emergency Broadcast Network creation to be featured in their multimedia "event" *Zod TV* is significant. One listen to the opening of *Telecommunication Breakdown* will tell you that it was quite appropriate: EBN is a band obsessed with manipulation of the media, mixing serious politics with entertainment.

Taking a page from Meat Beat Manifesto's book, EBN create schizophrenic hip-hop, filled with dozens and dozens of sound bites from all over the airwaves. Public



Pyramid Power!

DO YOU WANT TO PLAY?

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Namco
- SYSTEM: Saturn
- THEME: Arcade
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: 1-5

Sensory

Enemy pales in comparison to the flurry of beats and clips which fly through the EBN mix. The use of media-produced sounds isn't a particularly new idea, but the fervor with which the band pursues their craft is unmatched.

The multilayered nature of the music is mirrored by the purpose: not quite humor, and not quite serious. Unlike fellow hip-hop artists Consolidated, EBN's music can be appreciated on a number of different levels, and pure entertainment is one of them.

EBN is as much a video production group as a band; a CD-ROM section enhances the CD, where three quick-time videos have wisely been included. The videos match the breakneck speed of the music beat for beat, and often reveal the sources for the samples. There's also 37 interactive video walls for the user to fiddle with, but they're of dubious entertainment value.

It's not an original idea, but EBN manages to make interesting social commentary over powerful beats. Good stuff. **U!**

-Ed Finkler

Overload

Icebreaker for the 3DO is a ground breaker

evolutionary games always defy adequate description. In December, 1999's most radical difference game, *Ironclad*, went. Calling it a 3-D action strategy for adolescents

same burdens & anxiety, "I don't like it." "It" doesn't really describe it well. Different? No. I go far enough. Like all good music, "I don't like it" is kind of a tricky phrase.

But now it's "destroy all pyramids." Each of the five keys has a little head of a pyramid. The player aims the gun, shoots or otherwise clears the level of both mobile and immo-bile.

personals. The *hale* personals? Yes. In addition to the 'congratulatory' *hale* of 'Hi' and 'Hiya' to be absolutely strident, there are also the 'friendly' *hale* which are more easy. If they are easy, it's

back to the beginning of the decade, running now with a few simple annotations, they have not much room left to fluctuate in size. It seems fairly safe to say that they are

showing skill, timing, timing and nerve. I don't think I'll be able to progress if I don't take the time to learn to control myself. I'll be a better person.

than enough challenge here. We play games played by the family. I've said "Antony,"
"Anthony," and "Nick." Well, he's named Nick! But he isn't John Wayne. He isn't

When you
WAKE
up in
PRISON
Framed by
Some FAT,
UGLY Boy,
and the GROUND
RIPPLES beneath
your feet—
YOU'RE NOT
DRUNK
OR
F*%@ED
Up on
DRUGS—
you're
LOADED

CULTURE SHOCK

GO? DIGITAL GO! AWAY!

It's not a good sign when the coolest thing on your CD-ROM is a video advertisement for the Ralph Fiennes cyberlick, *Strange Days*.

To be fair, *Go Digital Interactive Magazine*, the most recent attempt in computer publishing, offers wonderful graphics and several intriguing lead stories—most notably a piece on dueling, miniature robots. Unfortunately, the only interactive element on the entire CD-ROM is clicking the Quit button so as to close the tedious program.

Go Digital features music jingles off an interesting assortment of albums, and this particular issue included the Foo Fighters, Herbie Hancock and Tricky, but

Go Digital

- Electromedia
- Windows/Mac

2345

IN THE ROCK EVERYMAN

OASIS BLEEDS POETRY

FROM A SCENE



Jake Housh's life is pretty much like yours or mine—he hangs out with his friends, works at a pay-

the-cent job and has more than a few beers on the weekend. But Housh, the main songwriter for this scrappy Columbus, Ohio, four-piece, is different in one important respect: He's able to take what seems on the surface to be an average life and find the poetry in it. Whether it's a scratchy, hoarse-throated rave-out or a tender, intimate song, Housh is

never less than droll, honest and completely engaging. In just a couple of lines ("It's afternoon, a record's playing, you're not saying what you feel—I wonder if you can"), he perfectly captures that ambivalent anguish

that everyone has experienced with wry, terse poignancy. With the help of his eminently able bandmates, Housh takes a twentysomething's alienated complaints about life and transforms them from mere whines into compelling rock and roll, and that's no small feat.

—Mike Wilson

Moviola

- Poem
- Away



frustratingly, the songs won't play in continuous fashion.

As for most of the digital videos on the CD-ROM, they're generally of poor quality or tainted with an abiding green hue (not the result of my Power PC). And most exceedingly chafing was the weak sound quality that caused every person's voice on the CD-ROM to speak with a lisp. Cindy Brady "S." An adult section, "In Bloom," may tantalize despondent singles into making the initial purchase of *Go Digital*, but after viewing the drab sequences of unattractive images, first-time buyers won't ever come back for more.

You can't take it with you on a bus, flip through it or use it to swat a fly. Maybe I'm missing the point, but more conceivably, *Go Digital* has little point to make.

—Rob Bernstein





BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD

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GAME

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your computer
as smart
as us.

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STUPIDITY



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CULTURE SHOCK

BORED OF THE RINGS

Playing *Lords of Midnight* is like starting a fantasy trilogy on the third book. There's a lot of climactic action and intriguing characters, but there's also a big gap in character development and background history.

Back in 1984, a game called *Lords of Midnight* premiered on the Commodore 64. Now, 11 years later, the third in the series continues with the story of the newest threat to the land

interface. Instead of controlling a single party or person, the player directs the actions of several far-flung characters as they attempt diverse quests. To win, the player must defeat Boroth and keep one member of the Moon's royal house alive.

The interface is smooth and players can take direct control of any character at any time, so as not to miss out on juicy battles and confrontations.

Lords of Midnight isn't the most original game in the world; and devotees ofSSI's AD&D games may not care for the interface, but it's different enough to be interesting.

—John Wesley Hardin

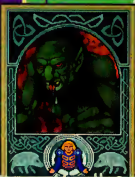
TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Dunaark
- SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
- THEME: Fantasy Adventure
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

12345

of *Midnight*. Boroth, Wolfheart and the Dark Fey. Epic fantasy has been mined out as a genre, and LOM covers little more ground than J.R.R. Tolkien.

Lack of original plot aside, however, *Lords Of Midnight* is a hefty chunk o'fantasy, packaged in an unusual



Carnage Visiois

Playmates calls *Mutant Chronicles: Dismantroopers* "the most action-packed combat game you've ever played." Although *Chronicles* is a creative, action-packed game, its side/vertical-scrolling format may discourage players. *Chronicles*, however, breathes new life into this tired format with its high level of violence, booming sound and effective gameplay.

Players control one of two futuristic soldiers in a variety of environments against the mutant hordes of the Dark Legion.

Chronicles' gameplay is reminiscent of *Double Dragon*—you can kick and punch enemies in close quarters or use weapons from farther away. This combination provides enough variety to tackle the game's seemingly endless supply of mutants. Climbing and dropping from platforms and other terrain levels can be tricky, but that's the only weakness of the gameplay. Players face progressively harder enemies and bosses during the game's eight levels, so don't think you'll sit still. The creative layout of the various worlds takes the game beyond the typical level-boss-level



TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Playmates
- SYSTEM: Genesis
- THEME: RPG
- MEGABITS: N/A
- LEVELS: 8

12345



setup. Also worthy of mention is that *Chronicles* is extremely violent—body parts fly across the screen after battles. If you can stomach it, it's worth a try.

—Russ Greenleaf

tv.t.html "When it all comes down to dust, I

Iron Angel of The Apocalypse

THE RETURN

Directed by Minoru KUSAKABE

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CULTURE SHOCK

IMPARTIAL REVIEWS OF THE LATEST IN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Go FOR THE GILL

For anyone who's bought an aquarium, sunk hundreds of dollars into exotic fish and equipment and then had to make the long, sad journey to the pet store with a bag full of dead fish after the first power outage, there's a suitable alternative on CD-ROM to keep devoted hobbyists from giving up before they kill a fish.

The Nature Collector's Freshwater Fish CD-ROM is a virtual aquarium that gives users the opportunity to act as the curator of a fish museum, traveling the world for new inductees.

The main goal of the CD-ROM is to keep the fish alive. Controls for water temperature, oxygen levels, filter and food consumption must be adjusted to suit the exhibit, and as the fish become healthier and happier, the exhibit will become more popular and boost the curator's standing in the fish museum community. Slowly, amateur to full-fledged curator. With impressive 3-D graphics and footage of the overly enthusiastic guide, Nick Adams (he almost wet himself when he hears that the Ugandan Dogfish is going to have a litter), it's easy to get caught up in the program if you can figure out how it works.

Targeted for CD-ROM users from age 6 to adult, everyone in that range should have an equally difficult time getting started. Unless your friends have nicknamed you Johnny Mnemonic, the first couple times through the CD-ROM will be confusing with the directions and totally impossible without them. Although the fish are computer generated, graphs chart their health, and it's difficult to keep from feeling responsible for their well-being. It is inevitable that not every specimen will survive the transition, but after catching, transplanting and caring for the slimy little buggers, it still hurts to see the tombstones that pop up in the aquarium after a fish has passed on to the big pond in the sky.

Billed as educational entertainment for the entire family, *Freshwater Fish* combines that with the look and feel of a game. It also succeeds in offering all the aggravation of maintaining a real tank at a fraction of the cost and without the hassles of storage. Best of all, however, is that when the disc has worn out its welcome, there's no guilt in flushing it.

—Mike Stokes

THE NATURE COLLECTOR: Freshwater Fish

- Spectrum Holobyte
- Windows

12345



Fish Food



Under any circumstances, it's a good rule to never insult a stranger with a knife.

For most, this comes as no surprise. Common sense usually keeps people's mouths shut in dark alleys or pool halls when confronted with a knife-wielding thug, but there are other cases that are less defined, such as sushi bars.

Now, there have been very few, if any, instances of sushi chefs acting thug-like, but

they do carry knives, and they do not like to have their feelings hurt. Thanks to Aroné's *Beauty of Japan Through the Art of Sushi* CD-ROM, sushi-lovers can take a crash course on sushi dos and don'ts that explains proper sushi-bar etiquette, such as allowing the chef to choose your meal for you, what to drink and whether or not to tip.

A cultural and art form rich in history, the CD-ROM is broken down into three sections: general info, how to prepare sushi and the beauty of Japan. There is an explanation of how to eat Susho properly (and perhaps more importantly how not to) as well as an explanation of the various types of sushi available. For anyone looking to impress a date, another section offers

instructions on how to prepare sushi along with film footage of how to artistically curve the vegetables that accompany the dish.

While the information is presented clearly and the subject matter is interesting even if the CD-ROM itself leaves something to be desired from a stylistic standpoint. Composed mostly of crude photos and animation, movement is choppy and the disc gets monotonous. Other topics such as tea ceremonies and flower arranging seem to have been added as an afterthought, mostly without sound or film footage, leaving potential sushi eaters with a bad taste in their mouths.

—Mike Stokes

THE BEAUTY OF JAPAN THROUGH THE ART OF SUSHI

- Aroné Interactive
- Windows

12345



to dust, I will help you if I must, I will kill you

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CULTURE SHOCK

SEASON of the Witch

—IntraCorp Scoops Interplay with *Witchaven*

There's a phrase in the game software business that's applied to products that are previewed at trade shows but never seem to reach retail shelves: vaporware. Sometimes, vapor product eventually materializes; on other occasions, the game that languishes in development too long has its thunder stolen by more timely imitators. Currently, the most famous piece of vaporware in the game industry is Interplay's *Stonekeep*, a *Doom*-style foray into the world of swords and sorcery (i.e., no guns) that's already been in development for five years.

And here we have humble IntraCorp beating Interplay to the punch with *Witchaven*, a weapons-oriented dungeon crawl with one of id's famous engines.

Witchaven comes complete with the usual goofy backstory, but what this game is really about is hacking and slashing. Armed with various weapons and the occasional use of magic, the gamer must rend and

rip his or her way through approximately half a dozen different classes of D&D-type monsters (which is not nearly enough variety).

The graphics are mostly quite strong, with each monster-type given unique looks and movements, while the audio is a mixed bag. The sound effects are decent, but the musical score is not nearly ambitious enough.

Unfortunately, not nearly enough attention was paid to the visual or audio end of spellcasting. A *Nuke* spell, for example, besides being a flaming anachronism, is among the most drab effects in the entire game, while the lack of audio spell cues actually hurts gameplay.

Obviously, *Witchaven* is no state-of-the-art masterpiece, but it's an extremely solid piece of work that may eventually upstage its more prominent, long-awaited competition. —Z. Burroughs

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: LucasArts
- SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
- MEGABITS: 8
- THEME: RPG
- LEVELS: N/A

12345



LET LOVE RULE...or something

Feeeling a bit down? Needing some enlightenment? The soundtrack for your spiritual rebirth has arrived, but it won't be found at the local healing crystal shop.

A collaboration between Van Christie and Jim Marcum of Die Warzan and vocalist Jane Jansen, *Oxygene 23* pulls the listener into a realm of powerful rhythm and melody. Jansen's voice is the benevolent ruler, sliding from delicate to powerful and all in between. The instrumentation is just as diverse, from Angel's plucked string work to Sacrifice's driving dance beat. Horns and piano float in and out of the mix, introducing new textures and melodies. Marcum even plays a little flute.

What's most impressive, though, is that the songwriting trio have avoided all the possible clichés. No matter how much the listener might expect musical ornament, the chants on *Krenat* float him or her into a state of bliss—will or not. Resistance is futile.

If you're expecting black leather industrial angstfests, this isn't it—in fact, it's about as far from it as possible. But even ears that normally tune out this kind of thing will find *Oxygene 23* enchanting. Soothing, uplifting and intensely spiritual, *Blue* is one of the most powerful CDs released this year. —Ed Fimbler

OXYGENE 23

■ ALICE
■ FIFTH COLUMN RECORDS

12345

Leonard Cohen

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"No, that doesn't make your butt look big."

"It tastes just like mom used to make."

"You must have a high metabolism."

"You're telling me those are fake?"

"Have you been working out?"

"You look great in spandex."

"I'm sure it's very big."

"Oh, you're so clever."

*Top 20
suck-up lines.*

"Wow. It looks so real."

"You're so photogenic."

"Chartreuse is your color."

"Honestly, I never noticed."

"You don't look a day over 25."

"I've never seen anything that big."

"No way. You mean those aren't real?"

"This is the best meatloaf I've ever had."

"You mean that's not your natural color?"

"She's your daughter? I thought you were sisters."



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CULTURE SHOCK

THE SAD TALE OF A GOURD GONE BAD

JACK-O: Poor Man's Pumpkinhead

Best of all me—I actually had to try sitting through this film on three separate occasions. Before you judge me harshly as brain-damaged, let it be known that I'm a sucker for anything with a Halloween theme—I may even be tempted to watch a Cornishers Halloween special when the time strikes.

Enough about that. Once upon a time there was a Jack-O-Lantern-headed creature called Jack-O. (It's a dumb name, but Pumpkinhead was already taken). Jack-O was a demon invoked by a man hung for murder a hundred years ago. A local farmer managed to stop this pentecostal devil by showing a makeshift cross

through its "heart" and buried it where it was to remain, only to be conveniently rediscovered on Hallow's Eve '95. Dumb, bad beer-guzzling teenage kids tear the cross out, so Jack-O can rise up with his handy scythe and slice his way through

their necks and chests. (Imagine getting killed for kicking a bunch of sticks—there's karma for you.) To extend this plot, Jack-O goes on the warpath to find the youngest relative to the farmer

who raised him years ago. From here begins a nonstop parade of the worst acting I've seen in some time. Perhaps there was a bad acting contest on the set—which, in this case, the cast would all be winners.

You may ask if there are any familiar faces in this train wreck, and, yes, there are. Besides trying to in to show off his silicone implants in a quasi-but gratuitous shower scene, Lianina Quigley (*Return of the Living Dead*) plays the babysitter of the boy Jack-O is stalking. Fellow scream-queen Brinke Stevens appears in a late-night "spooky" TV movie the boy watches (which looks like it was shot in Super 8). The late John Carradine and Cameron Mitchell are here in beyond-the-grave cameo appearances: a *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. One has to wonder whether either actor knew they would be in this wretched film prior to their deaths. Unlike *Plan 9*, though, the actor who "ghosts" Carradine resembles him more than the Lugosi/Mason dual role.

This is a wretched Bataan Death March of a horror film. Besides brief spooky moments in the beginning, Jack-O is shot in a manner that prevents any kind of Halloween atmosphere to kick in. This film could've been a cross between the superior *Screamers* and *Halloween*, but instead you get a rock in your trick-or-treat bag.

—Frank Kurtz

DIE WITH YOUR BOOTS ON

WIRED WEST ADVENTURES FOR THE PC

Go West—for adventure, for fortune. Or maybe for disaster and death. Following a grusky fight over a poker game, the player is dropped unceremoniously, and unarmed, to live or die in DiamondBack, N.M. 1882.

Quick wits and good sense defuse some situations, but when they fail, there's the trusty six-shooter...if the player can hang on long enough to obtain a shooting iron.

The town and the scenic back-grounds are dramatic, with deep and melancholy lighting. Interiors are, alas, not up to the atmospheric film noir exteriors. Three dozen or so characters are viewed first as distant drawings, then switch to close-ups of actors' faces. These talking-head encounters are driven by meander speech fragments; with reactions varying depending on what the gamer says.



Jack-O's headpiece

Jack-O's headpiece

Two-fisted players control movement by keyboard, and select by mouse. Click and drag activates inventory items. Ease of use is the big draw here. Sassy remarks can lead to violence, and bad first impressions lead to worse second meetings. Gun-slinging is simple: An on-screen hand aims the gun according to crosshairs. Frequent reloading adds unnecessary realism; the player must laboriously click on each bullet chamber to see it fill with new ammo. Most characters speak with overdone Westernized speech, which turns to tedium waiting for them to finish their flowery remarks. The player may be tempted to whip out a gun and put an end to it. But beware: Gratuitous gunplay can lead to a quick downfall.

There are almost two dozen fully rendered 3-D buildings in town. The variety of attractive locations and the large number of citizens combine to make the DiamondBack a real community. The player reasons with on-screen characters to gain clues and rewards. This dry pastime is sparked by the arcade-style games.

Dust stops short of greatness, named only by some bad acting and overenthusiastic scripting. But the beauty of the art, and the ingenious plot, details make this the best Western game to date.

—Joyce Worley

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Cyberlix
- SYSTEM: PC CD & Mac CD
- THEME: Adventure
- MEGS: 8
- PLAYERS: 1

4 1/2

JACK-O

Triboro Entertainment Group

12345

Tasmania 3D



compatible

48.05



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CULTURE SHOCK

Fully Automatic for the People

There have been strange days for industrial rockers Sister Machine Gun. If someone had said three years ago that Chris Randall would have made the album that is *Burn*, they would've been lying. And while SMG's previous album, *The Torture Technique*, was closer to *Burn*, it still seemed highly unlikely that Randall would mellow out so drastically.

The album opens with *Red*, which hits the listener immediately with the utter grooviness of it all. Gone is the driving energy of *Sins Of The Flesh* and TTT's waves of noise. In its place is a mid-tempo hip-hop beat driven by the mother of all snare drums, textured with some funky guitar lines and keyboards. And when the chorus hits, Chris breaks into an unabashedly pop vocal melody. It's not *Blur*, but then again, it's a surprise from the man whose last album had a song named *Krukhead*.

Admittedly, *Burn* isn't quite a peacefest, though. *Hole In The Head* sounds like the Beastie Boys met Rage Against The Machine in a dark alley and decided to go a few rounds, and *Better Than Me* has distorted vocals over a driving beat and furious war guitar. But it's tracks like *Burn* (also on the *Mortal Kombat* soundtrack) and *Snake* that really show Randall's improved musicianship, the latter featuring some great jazzy horn work. SMG has finally come into its own.

—Ed Finkler

**Sister
Machine
Gun**
■ *Burn*
■TVT Records
12345

SUNDAY! SUNDAY! SUNDAY!

PSX'S
DESTRUCTION
DERBY GIVES
OTHER RACING
GAMES THE
MALACHE CRUNCH!

TECH SPECS

Publisher: Sony/Psychonics
System: Sony PlayStation
Theme: Racing and demolition derby
Megabits: N/A
Players: 1 or 2 with link up peripheral
Levels: N/A

12345

There are a wide number of game enthusiasts who take great

pleasure in finding the fringe benefits that can be found in most video games. Perhaps it's running down the horses in *Daytona* or driving the track backward in *Need for Speed*. Maybe you take forbidden pleasure in happily running people down in *Road Rash*. Don't bother your therapist for an explanation of this behavior; in fact, just accept it. And admitting you need *Destruction Derby* (which packs stockcar racing and demolition goodness into a single game) is the first step.

Several unique tracks may be selected from the opening menu, including an ominous

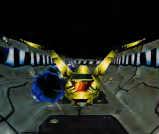
figure-eight track. All the raceways are quite narrow, sequestered by a tall fence on either side. This configuration promotes wrecks-o-plenty, not to mention a bit of driving skill. Traditional racing may be selected in which the object is to win the race while "wreckin'" racing scores points for winning the contest as well as the amount of damage you inflict on other vehicles.

Of course the mother of all the tracks is the demolition bowl. Sony took care to make the destructive contact as realistic as possible, glass and bumpers flying everywhere. Yet in the end, your biggest enemy is your own radiator. Protect it and live... and well, you know the rest.

Sony has brought game deviants everywhere a game that truly satisfies, without filling you up. Play it early and often.

—Dean Heger

"Who's doing the dishes? Look, these fellas!"



select snip

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CULTURE SHOCK

PITFALL: THE MAYAN ADVENTURE

PITFALL sans Pitfalls

Harry meets new pal, Bill Gates



fast, fun side-scroller that runs under...Windows?

For those of you getting into the multimedia scene, Windows has historically been one lame place to play games. All that operating system bogged down the games. Can you spell S-L-O-W (Insert loud snoring sound here)?

Microsoft promised that Windows 95 would be the first gameable Windows—and right out of the gate Activision has delivered. The original Pitfall was the grandfather of the side-scrolling games that we all play today. Pitfall: the Mayan Adventure brings that little pixelated, blocky dude from the early '80s into the high-res, multimedia '90s. The "plot" is straightforward—get through all the levels to rescue your dad. Dad who? None other than that little pixelated, blocky dude from the early '80s, of course!

The graphics are lush and lovingly hand-rendered, and in higher resolution than you'll find on the Sega and Nintendo versions



that came out last year. The soundtrack is kickin' and uses CD-ROM to play a CD audio score as you run, jump and whip your way through the jungle. Gameplay gets increasingly complex along the way and there are plenty of little puzzles to figure out.

And plenty of weird surprises.

The even better news for the gaming crowd is that Pitfall is just a sample of what games can be under Windows 95—this is just first-generation stuff! You'll definitely want to play the game in

"full-screen mode" as opposed to on top of the

Windows desktop like some word processing app. Playing a game with Windows icons and title bars is like watching a movie in a theater with the lights on.

The only problems with the game are the occasional hitch or slowdown during play

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Activision
- SYSTEM: Windows 95 CD-ROM
- THEME: Adventure
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: 18

12345

when you have all of the audio features turned on. Despite this shortcoming, Pitfall is a pit fall of adrenaline. Just put in the CD-ROM and play. No installation. Hey, this Windows 95 stuff actually works.

—David Gerding

WILDG.A.T.S.: Bright Colors, Big Adversity—Insert Cookie-Cutter Heroes Here



TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Playmates
- INTERACTIVE: Playmates
- SYSTEM: SNES
- THEME: Action
- MEGABITS: 16
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: 11+

12345

Artist Jim Lee's creation, the WildG.A.T.s team of superheroes, is known in the world of Saturday morning TV as well as in their best-selling Image comic book. In those mediums they are a pounding, pusillanimous team of brightly garbed heroes with interrelated powers—but while their new cast holds some thrills and excitement, it's simply all been done before and better elsewhere.

The plot is, of course, simple: The main player-

run characters of Warblade, Maul and Spartan all go on separate missions against the evil Daemones. As in the best of their comic stories, the various powers and abilities of the characters must be used in concert to overcome the foes. Warblade's hands bio-morph into blades as he clanks up walls and Maul's variable size is a factor.

But while the game is true to the comic and characters, it falls down as a game in that the controls are simply not as varied and as detailed as many players

will require. While the side-scrolling with 3-D forward and back levels are reminiscent of Golden Axe II, the lack of a way to meld the jumping, slashing, dashing movements means that most gameplay turns into an over-and-over pushing of the same few controls again and again.

Many fans of superhero comics may rightly feel that the WildG.A.T.s do have the depth, personality and demeanor to be the subject of a classic video game some day—but this isn't it.

—Neil Shapiro



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CULTURE SHOCK

Killed By The Cure

SOMETHING TO CHEW ON

Too old to be a slacker, too young to be a senile crank, Terry LaBan lurks on the fringes of the comic-book world. At his best—as seen in last year's *Cud*—he manages to be a rare blend of satirist and alchemist, taking some very adult concepts and topics and juxtaposing them with some basic

comic-book language. The effect can be both whimsical (as it was when he wrote a story centering on an African mating ritual and drew it in the style of an old Archie comic) and breathtaking (as it was in his tour de force, "You Can't Spank the Monkey If He's On Your Back!," which put the dicey field of performance art on the pedestal of big business and allowed both sides to come apart at the seams).

With the return of *Cud* (from a new publisher), a few changes have taken place: The flatout satire—and performance artist Bob Cudd—are gone, replaced for the moment by Eno and Plum (picture Archie and Betty if they'd starred in Richard Linklater's *Slacker*). The lead story is a comic delight in which the aimless Eno finds his calling as a sperm donor, but the stories that follow—including the saga of Plum's father's collection of Woodstock-era marijuana and a savage parody of *Terry & The Pirates*—push the whole thing over the edge.

If there's anything missing from the new *Cud*, it's the scathing Preston Sturges-like wit that dominated LaBan's last opus, "You Can't Spank The Monkey If He's On Your Back!"

In the meantime, he's produced a relentlessly amusing, very adult comic book that's likely to inspire giggling fits. One could start off a lot worse.

—Steve Darnall



CUD #1
■ Dark Horse Comics
■ Art & Story by
Terry LaBan

12345

A very wise man once pointed out the difficulty in doing something new and interesting with the guitar, especially in rock music. The problem, as he put it, was that with the guitar, you're basically playing the same song again and again. He went on to explain that the advent of computer technology in musicmaking has opened up new avenues, etc.

MEDICINE

HER HIGHNESS



MEDICINE

■ Medicine
■ Her Highness
■ American

1 1/2 2345

The best part is debatable, but it really does seem that in rock all the songs have been written. The key is rewriting the good stuff.

Medicine did that with their entry on *The Crow* soundtrack, a song that featured a circular, lullaby-type melody and vocals. It was a sweetly catchy little ditty, warming the hearts of neo-goths everywhere. Across the land, teenagers dressed in black would seek each other, "Did you hear that one song? *Time Baby 582* or something?" Unfortunately, *Her Highness* doesn't live up to the potential in that song. Somewhere along the line, the band forgot what was great about that one song—the great hook. There are flashes of melody in a few places, but for the most part the band rely of weaves of noisy guitar. The vocals are often too flat and encephaloid. Yes, this has been done before, but it's not interesting nowadays. Thoroughly forgettable.

—Ed Finkel



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CULTURE SHOCK

Comic Creator Is Genuine Marvel

Super
Man

The idea behind R.A. Montgomery's Comic Creator is nothing new; it's the execution that elevates this program to state-of-the-art status. For the first time, users have access to a genuinely satisfying Marvel and DC-style comic-book builder. The transparent interface allows computerists to select, then modify, background graphics, heroic and villainous characters and

a variety of props. Dialogue is broken down into balloons, thought bubbles and narrative boxes, with all text in appropriately comic-style font. There's also an impressive range of sound effects and even a feature that allows users to import art files from other sources.

Each of 10 or so super-heroic and villainous characters can be accessed, thereby making available a sheet of that specific character in dozens of different poses. We experienced occasional glitches (characters who were moved otherwise

would occasionally be missing portions of their anatomy when dragged back onto the monitor screen), but the program, by

far, overcomes its blemishes while retaining its virtues. Obviously, Over the Top often wondered why comic-book publishers don't simply purchase extensive art databases such as these in order to provide scripters with instant authoring tools. Obviously, Comic Creator is not intended to be a professional-level program, but it comes close. The primary limitations are the inflexible panel layouts and the insufficient pool of normal companion characters. The result of this latter inadequacy leads to the creation of extended fight sequences rather than genuine story lines. On the plus side, this comic-book maker allows the user to add sound to the proceedings, both via lettered and actual audio sound effects.

—Bill Kunkel

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Hearst New Media & Technology
- SYSTEM: Windows (1/Windows 95/Macintosh DC III minimum)
- THEME: Comic Book Creator
- MEGABITS: 4
- PLAYERS: 1

GREED IS GOOD

TOYED WITH GETTING AN MBA? PLAY CAPITALISM FIRST.

Brandon all hope, ye thumb twichers who enter here. Much like the real thing, Capitalism: Interactive Magic's greed-based strategy game, is all about numbers. Charts, graphs...and, well, more numbers. Nothing moves around, nothing blows up and the only "carriage" is limited to the option of owning and operating a meat processing plant. If figuring out a marketing strategy and improving cost efficiencies sounds more like work than fun, Capitalism ain't for you. On the other hand, if you always figured you could do Bill Gates one better and you love complexity, the Capitalism is worth a try. (If reading a manual burns you out, don't bother.)

TECH SPECS

Capitalism

- PUBLISHER: Interactive Magic
- SYSTEM: PC DOS CD-ROM
- THEME: Strategy
- PLAYERS: One/20
- LEVELS: N/A

The premise is simple—make money. You're given a cool \$10 million in cash with which to build your empire. You can issue stock, get bank financing and so forth—as long as the market and the banks think you're worth the risk. Two modes of play are included. A Scenario Mode puts you up against specific goals in a set time period. The open-ended Game Mode lets you see how rich you can get. Graphics are understated yet passable for the genre, though the "sound track" is bad—not much better than static.

Buy out your computer-controlled competition one by one and create a monopoly. Hey, you really can be like Bill...

David Genting

you mew-ron?

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†††ALLY †PPOSED ††

VIOLENCE

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CULTURE SHOCK

You're Mother is an Astronaut!



the chance to explore the heavens in several modes ranging from the view point of astronauts to going into a whirl under the couch while the family dog chews up the sun.

In the Navigator Mode, colorful maps help chart the galaxy while in Calendar Mode, the actual day can be seen for any day of the year from any point on Earth.

The coolest way to cruise the galaxy, and probably the way most of the time will be spent using *First Light*, is in the lower mode. Lower Mode allows some four astronauts to swoop down on

planets, stars and stars for a close-up look at their actual photographs, and feelings. And, if you're a NASA fanatic, some planetary statistics will define them; you've seen them all in real life, of course, has the most informative aspects of these discs.

The biggest problem with *First Light*, however, is that not enough days have been taken to keep users from doing it. For the most part, the graphics and vast array of features

tion are impressive, especially the CD-ROM's three computer lakes tip a hat to its multi-space than any other title.

Distant Suns First Light Interactive Space and Solar System Simulator

- Virtual Reality
- Laboratories
- Windows

12345



by doesn't Oasis get any respect? The British band's first record was one of 1994's

best releases and their second full-length effort is even better. But their debut, *Definitely Maybe*, only sold a couple hundred thousand copies in the States, while their compatriots Bush sold about 90 trillion records.

Yet despite their lack of chart

success), Oasis has consistently delivered some of the most enjoyable plain old rock and roll of the '90s. The five-piece has evolved into a blend of Sgt. Pepper-ish pop and straight-up rock, and has admirably filled the gap between the self-conscious indie rocker types and the chart-topping industrial/grunge/frat-rockers.

(What's the Story) Morning Glory admirably improves on *Definitely Maybe*'s hit-to-clunkers ratio. There are a couple by-the-numbers anthemic rockers on this record, including the title song, but Noel Gallagher's main strength as a songwriter is that he can't seem to write a forgettable chorus. Even *Wonderwall*, an orchestrated pop confection, and one of the album's best tracks, has really silly lyrics. What's a wonderwall? As laughable as the song can be, the hook behind it is just plain irresistible. Despite less-than-stellar lyrics, Oasis' pop smarts and rock know-how make for some of the best straight-ahead, crunchily ear candy on either side of the Atlantic.

—Mo Ryan

WONDERING ABOUT THE WONDERWALL

OASIS MANAGES TO MAINLINE CHORUS INTO YOUR CEREBRAL CORTEX

Oasis

- What's the Story? Morning Glory
- Yes

12345

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realistic
and you'd be
pulling gum off
the bottom of
your computer.

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Chris Gore
Computer Player

WILD WEST



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CULTURE SHOCK



There's a cruel and irresponsible enjoyment that comes from flamethrowing the friendly prehistoric Barney dinosaur into crispy flakes of nothing. And that's the appeal

of the late-night, toy store survival game Power Pete.

As the gun-toting, fully camouflaged, G.I. Joe derivative action hero, Pete, it's your duty to rescue a defenseless pack of fuzzy bunnies that have escaped from their bargain-basement holding pen.

A reconnaissance mission turns into comic, all-out warfare as you make your way through five deadly toy department store levels including: Prehistoric Plaza, Candy Cane Lane, Fairy Tale Trail, the Magic

Funhouse and a fifth level of undisclosed red-tag terrors. Like any good piece of action figure merchandise, Pete has a full arsenal of weapons to choose from as he explores the store's treacherous aisles. Triple-barrel gumblasters, rubber-band



shooters and the coveted (and discontinued) Summer Fun Backyard Flamethrower will help tear and sear the stuffing out of your Grimm adversaries.

The graphics are strong, particularly the renderings of Little Miss Muffet's under-tufted monstrosities, the evil-to-the-hollow-core chocolate bunnies, and the bone-throwing brute appropriately named Nongo the Neanderthal. The action is swift-moving and there are plenty of things to kill, as well as weapons to kill with for trigger-happy gamers.

The only trouble with Power Pete is that it's just a smidgen too easy to conquer. There are 15 levels of mayhem to take pleasure in, but after a span of three days, the game is over. Fortunately, Pete's batteries have some lasting power, and on random occasions you'll find yourself energized to start the adventure all over.

Power Pete breaks no new ground in gaming, but makes a pleasant mess of a certain, unnamed purple dinosaur.

—Rob Bernatkin



TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Pangea Software
- SYSTEM: Macintosh
- THEME: Adventure
- MEGABITS: System 7 Required
- PLAYERS: 1-2
- LEVELS: 15

3 1/2

heavy, Drunken Master II <http://www>

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CULTURE SHOCK

MOCK TURTLE SOUP



Gamera is really neat, Gamera is full of **meat**

NEARLY 30 YEARS AGO, Japanese movie studio Daiei attempted to come up with an alternative to Toho's *Godzilla*, which brought in massive kiddie crowds in the 1960s. Armed with some wacky ideas (brain-eating space women, giant monster with "rainbow rays") and a budget the fraction of Toho's, Daiei produced seven films with Gamera, a 200-foot flying turtle with flame breath and tusks.

In his third (and arguably the best) feature film, Gamera took on "the

supersonic monster" Gyaos. Gamera vs. Gyaos is a riot of choppy editing, some okay special effects and some truly crazed plot devices. This brings us to one of last year's most popular movies in Japan, *Gamera 1995* (in Japan, it's something like *Gamera Giant Monster Midair Battle*).

Daiei saw what updating a character can do. Similar to the "new" *Godzilla* movies,

Gamera's been given the big FX budget, a mod origin and a more serious tone. It's now explained that Gamera ("the defender of the universe") and the three human-hankerin' Gyaos were created by those rats from Atlantis 12,000 years ago. From then on, Gamera and the two Gyaos trash the city and fly around until the movie speeds toward a head-scratching ending.

Unlike the *Godzilla* movies, the human element has been thankfully downplayed. Steven Seagal's daughter Ayako Fujitani, 14, plays Asagi, the human "link" to Gamera. She's pretty good—heck, with Gamera she's already made a better action film than any of her dad's—and the rest of the human actors accomplish the job, which is to pretend that a giant turtle is defending mankind.

The FX, for the most part, are above average. These films still suffer from the Curse of the Guys in Suits syndrome—rubber feet flopping around on close-ups, silly-looking mouths and suit wrinkles where there shouldn't be

any. But the costumes are far and away superior to the early Gamera flicks and are even better than the recent *Godzilla FX*.

All in all, it's a pretty fun retro effort for Gamera. There's lots of action, better-than-expected FX and a promising start to what will obviously be a boatload of sequels (even the return of Gyaos is left open). You'll believe a turtle can fly.

—Don Butler



Gamera 1995

■ Toho Pictures

12345

THE BIG RED ONE



RED DRAGON #1

- Comics: Comics
- Story by Brian Azarello
- Art by Tony Akins

While the Red Dragon character may have vestigial roots in Conan's old *Elementals* series, readers need nothing but the first issue to understand the basic premise of the book.

Don't be misled by Simon Pisley's superheroic cover; this isn't your typical garden variety super-super-book. In fact, creators Brian Azarello and Tony Akins have conceived of something I don't think I've ever seen before in

comics. The story revolves around Red Dragon, a Chinese super-being of unlimited capabilities. Raised in luxury, he takes on tasks when asked by those who treat him as if he's a king—without consideration for who or what is damaged in the process. In this issue, for example, his attempt to thwart a hostage situation ends rather unfortunately for the hostages, as his goal is more to take out the ringleader of the gang than to save lives.

It's a strange and unusual book, but I really enjoyed

the unique twist on the superhero genre—if that's an apt description.

Carrying the mayhem-filled proceedings is the beautiful artwork of Tony Akins. Akins has taken more than a little bit of the Japanese manga style and added just a hint of American adventure comic strips into the mix. I've seen some of what Akins has ahead and I'm really looking forward to future issues.

Try something different and check this puppy out. You may be surprised.

—Frank Kurtz

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CULTURE SHOCK

NOVEMBER
PRODUCT
REVIEW

Downy With Downy

A lot of Downy's commerciality is in the products of April Freshness, designed by women. Clothes with a patented smooth finish. Inarguably, Downy succeeds in both softening and freshening clothing.

The problem with Downy, however, is that there's an unreasonable correlation between its clever subject and the product's ability to soften. A baby wrapped in a pink cloth intimates that Downy makes clothes come out of the dryer as soft as a baby's bottom. FUSION product testers have found the contrary—while a towel may be more absorbent and better suited to a dryer than a baby's bottom—it's certainly not any softer to the touch of skin. Downy challenges the consumer with its tag line, "Feel the Fluffy Softness." Well Downy, we took your challenge and regretfully inform you that your April Fresh fabric softener just doesn't live up to the hype. *Rob Bernstein*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Procter & Gamble

SYSTEM: Dryer

THEME: Fabric Softener

MEGABITS: N/A

PLAYERS: 1 & up

LEVELS: Press, Cottons

12345

Downy

20 oz./11 oz. (473/311 g)

Softener

Do We Have To YELL At This Art, Too?!?

One of the things I'm supposed to be good for you or something, so I thought I'd check out this *Matisse-Aragon-Prokofiev* thingie. So I went to the cultural art stuff next time I'm staring the intergalactic life of Friendly Frank Korte's Cocktail Lounge. Rib Shack. So I popped the disc in the CD-ROM drive, and lo and behold, I saw many pretty pictures. I guess this Matisse guy was some kind of famous artist or something, and I guess I can see why—he took the diffuse revolutionary impulses of the Impressionists and with bold color and a playful sense of shape, transformed painting from a cerebral art form into a vibrant, emotional celebration. See, told ya I'd learn something. Anyways, I didn't find the info—pictures, music, text and sometimes (look it up) voice-overs—on the other two guys half as interesting, and the arty types who made the game didn't provide much in the way of clues as to why these three artists belong together. They were all born around the turn of the century in Europe, and they all ended up as suffering artists, but beyond the fact that Aragon and Prokofiev were both Communists and Aragon and the apolitical Matisse met once in 1942, they were just three random guys as far as I could tell. Plus the text that they provide as a running commentary on the guys' work is pretty high-falutin' and obtuse, if you ask me: "However unwilling, our three craftsmen would still be witnesses to bloody wars and revolutions," Yikes, sounds like a high school slide show lecture—snore city, my friend. I woulda thought they'd want to aim this kind of infotainment product at the managers out there or at folks without much of an art education, but they throw around phrases like "Matisse painted *alla prima*" a little too much for that. But overall, the pictures were darn nice and I learned a fair amount about these guys, so I guess it wasn't all for nothing. So test me on my knowledge next time you see me at the bar, over at Frank's Lounge.

—Mo Ryan



Great Artists Collection: Matisse-Aragon-Prokofiev

■ New Line New Media
■ Mac/Windows

12345

waves." Godzilla Vs. Mecha-Godzilla

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CULTURE SHOCK

No Apology Game
Ratings By FUSION
& Guest Editors

RECAP

CONSOLE

RATING

GAME

PC

RATING

R. Bassave
H. Grossman
(Editor 2004)
A. Keltz
B. Kunkel

R. Bassave
S. Honeywell
(Editor con-
tinued)
S. Kent
B. Kunkel

3-D Tennis (PlayStation)	5	2	4	2
Air Combat (PlayStation)	4	3	-	2
Ballz (3DO)	4	3	3	3
Battle Arena Toshinden (PSX)	5	4	4	-
B. Walsh's Football (Gen.)	5	3	3	4
Blackfire (Saturn)	4	3	2	2
Corpse Buffet (3DO)	5	5	5	5
Doom (SNES)	4	3	4	4
Hell (3DO)	3	3	2	1
Judge Dredd (SNES)	3	3	2	2
Kileak (PSX)	3	3	2	-
Myst (Saturn)	5	3	4	4
N.F.L. Quarterback (32X)	5	3	4	4
Power Drive Rally (Jag.)	3	3	3	-
Raiden Project (PSX)	4	3	4	3
Rayman (PSX)	4	4	3	3
Romance...IV (SNES)	-	-	4	2
Syndicate (3DO)	3	4	5	3
Shadow Squadron (32X)	4	-	4	2
Shinobi Legions (Saturn)	3	4	4	3
Slam 'N Jam '95 (3DO)	5	-	4	3
WeaponLord (SNES)	3	3	-	-
Wild Woody (Sega CD)	3	2	-	2
Wing Com. III (3DO)	4	4	4	3

Ascendency	3	4	3	-
Blood Bowl	3	4	3	-
Casino Deluxe	-	3	3	3
Celtic Tales	3	4	-	2
Chaos Control	4	3	-	2
DiscWorld	3	4	-	-
Final Unity	5	4	4	2
Full Throttle	5	4	5	4
HardBall IV	5	3	-	4
Ishar 3	3	1	-	-
Jagged Alliance	4	4	-	-
The Journeyman...2	5	3	4	2
Lost Eden	4	3	4	2
MechWarrior II	5	5	3	-
Paparazzi	3	3	4	4
Phantasmagoria	4	-	4	3
Slipstream 5000	4	3	3	3
SpaceQuest VI	5	4	3	3
Super Street Fighter II	3	3	1	2
Terminal Velocity	4	4	-	3
Thunderscape	4	4	-	-
Ultimate Doom	5	3	3	3
Virtual Pool	5	4	4	4
Virtual Tag II: You're It!	5	5	5	5

scale: 1-5 (5=best)

scale: 1-5 (5=best)



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External Correspondence

GEORGE LUCAS FUSION,

Thank you for the George Lucas interview in the October issue even if it was a little short. It was great to hear even a small amount of information on the next set of Star Wars movies. It's been so long since the last one I was beginning to wonder if it was really going to happen. Good things come to those who wait, right. My only worry is the use of unknowns as the principle players. One bad performance could taint an otherwise great series of science-fiction movies. Let's hope for the best.

Dana Gillan
Rochester, NY

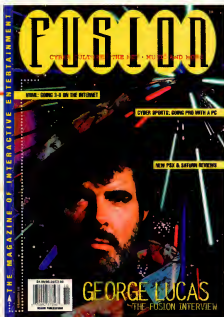
Right on, Dana! We will keep you informed of the creative movements of George Lucas in future issues.

COVER ART Dear FUSION,

Your magazine is really very good. The writing is fine and the graphics first-rate. But what really peeves me is to see George Lucas on the cover with a roll of film behind him, showing four shots on Indiana Jones and not one of any of my Star Wars faves! Okay, so you showed Obi-Wan. Who cares about Obi-Wan? Or Ben, if that is his real name? What about Han? Or Chewie? Or Wedge? All I see is two AT-ATs (Imperial) and that is it. And one of the shots is of the crappy Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom! Yuck! I hate Short Round! Except for that you guys are great.

Best,
Will Stevens
Phoenix, AZ

Sorry to disappoint you, Will. We'll have our art department immediately redesign the Lucas cover with your favorite shots of Wedge and maybe even with a couple of shots of Salacious Crumb to boot. How does that sound?



YOU @\$%*&!!!!!! FUSION

Why do you feel it is necessary to use four-letter words in your reviews and articles? I am always taken off guard when I am reading any new issue and I come across the "F" word used in some creative new meaning. Don't get me wrong, I have uttered some profane profanities at my time but I just don't think using them in your mag is a good idea. Maybe you guys could make up a new curse word like Conan O'Brien did on his show. I believe the

word was "Krank." You guys could use this word when you want to use the other nasty word and everything will be neat and clean for the kids, ok?

Neil Tillson
Cincinnati, OH



Neil, after a long and arduous meeting, we as the editors of Fusion have decided that our new self-avoided curse word will be "Neil." Whenever you read the word "Neil" please think of it as the most devastating utterance known to man.



WE TOUCH OUR READERS IN STRANGE WAYS

FUSION,

Happy happy, joy joy! I can scarcely express the (see 1st sentence) I felt when I tore open the latest edition of my FUSION and saw (delight delight!) one of most favorite blasts from the past MadLibs. Many a happy year I spent as a child on these bad boys. My best friend and I even "bonded" over them. We shared pregnant moments waiting for the Weekly Reader Book Club pamphlets to show up for school so we could send off for the next on an exciting series of MadLibs. And then, of course, more waiting. And then, finally, the day we usually played sick from school, it happened. Oh, the nostalgia. One of our favorite things to do was use the word "occurred." Not only did it double on consonants, but one time we got the best sentence: "when suddenly, an accident occurred." We hooted over that one for years. It still makes us feel kind of squishy and warm inside. Thanks for all the good times. I'll be there for the bad, happiness, tears, and let's not forget the Big Woody.

Your #1 fan,
Deniche Pace
Oak Park, IL

DOOMED OUT

Dear FUSION,

Enough with the Doom coverage! I'm getting sick and tired of seeing that game featured in your magazine month in and month out. The fact is the game is much too violent for kids and in general should not be as popular as it is. It is a sick reflection on society when we can act remorseful when we hear of terrible murders committed against real people but then we turn around and go ga-ga over a game that is pure violence. I'm not a preacher or anything but I truly believe enough is enough when it comes to what is deemed as suitable entertainment for people. We are all being numbed from the shoulders up and the one thing we as a society cannot afford to do is let game makers and marketers sell us this garbage unquestioned! We don't have to accept things like this if we don't want to. I guess I'm in the minority on this issue due to the popularity of the game, but I still like to think that maybe there are at least some people out there who see the trend toward violent games as a dangerous one.

Name withheld

HASTY WHEY FACE

FUSION,

Here, here! Thanks for showing me the way to the Shakespearean insult service on the web. (<http://www.preferred.com/~joey/insult.html>) I am having a ball insulting friends and relatives with my newly acquired skill and I owe it all to you

"tickle-brained, rump-fed, wheyface, fat-ass bastards."

By the way, what's Whiey?

Bill Lang
Portland, ME

Whiey! Truahn: the watery part of milk that separates after the milk souz and thickens. Rats-ass bastards? Somehow I don't think that was one of the insults available on the site.

GIRLY GAMES

Dear Editors of FUSION,

I like your magazine—someday it might be as good as *Computer Game Review*. But I must ask you, where are all the games that cater to female audiences? Do such games not exist or are you guys too busy taking pictures of yourselves flinging Sony PlayStations around like Frisbees? I believe I speak for many female FUSION readers (there must be a lot of us out there, don't you think?) when I say I'd like to see more

articles that cater to the feminine gender. You guys had a column in your October issue (the one with that really cool, ultra in-depth interview with George Lucas) regarding sports games that you would like to see. Why not put some heat on game makers by proposing some hypothetical games oriented toward women? For instance, what about a virtual makeover game? Or a CD-ROM where you could shop at a cyber-mall? What about a "Construct a Dream Date" interactive adventure? You have to admit, the possibilities are pretty endless. In the movie *Clueless*, the main character had a computer program that would show her all of her clothes and help her coordinate her outfit for the day. Keep that in mind. Thanks!

Your loyal reader,
Linda Loring
Flossmoor, IL

Linda, we'll pass your complaint on to Mattel. Maybe we can get a Barbie CD-ROM out of it for you.



★★★★★
(OUT OF FOUR) JUST AS
THE STAR WARS SAGA SET
NEW SCI-FI MOVIE STANDARDS,
DARK FORCES SETS A
HIGH MARK... — USA TODAY

"IMPRESSIVE!"
— DARTH VADER



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FALL OUT

VIRTUAL SOCIETY

Dear FUSION,

Great in-depth story on VRML. I didn't realize that there were already three-dimensional sites available. When I read about it in your story, "New World Order," I immediately downloaded the Intervista software for my PC. While I haven't explored too many 3-D sites yet, I'm really looking forward to what's in store for the World Wide Web.

A friend of mine, somewhat of a luddite, also read the story and feels that such described virtual worlds are "menacing." He claims that this technology will have a negative effect on

OUT-MANEUVURED

FUSION,

In regard to Rich Heinrich's laughable column about copyright protection, "ha, ha, ha," He says, quote, "Blockbuster doesn't charge us twice to buy a video. Next time I buy a product, I should be allowed to install it a few times, instead of just once." What? That is utter bull. Blockbuster may not charge Mr. Heinrich twice per rental, but they sure as hell don't allow him to reproduce copies of the tape and distribute it to all of his friends. Sure, if his friends want to use or play a program on his computer, no problem. It's the distribution of product where copyright protection becomes a problem. The analogy used in his column is way off the mark. Okay, CD-ROM manufacturers are way overcharging consumers, but has this really come as any surprise? Did you really count on these manufacturers to uphold their promises? Come on, Rich.

Brian Dellis
Scarsdale, NY

Like we've always said Brian, Rich's views are Rich's views; however, you have a good point and we'll be sure to pass it on.

KISS OFF

Dear FUSION,

Only a rating of 3 for Kiss of Death? I thought it would be a 5 for sure. Nicolas Cage was awesome as Junior and I thought Caruso was equally as good. And you don't even make mention of director Barbet Schroeder. With the exception of *Barfly*, I thought Kiss of Death was his best work to date. I don't know guys, I think I want a second opinion.

Katherine Booges
New York, NY

Okay Kathy, here's your second opinion. You're an encyclopedic film critic. I hope that'll do.



how people interrelate with one another. Less interpersonal contact, he says, "will lead to a cold society." I think he's been reading too much Burroughs or something, but personally I think it will positively change the way people think and act toward one another. Maybe I'm just talking nonsense. What do you guys think?

Tom Davies
Baltimore, MD

Yes, Tom, you are talking nonsense, but that's okay. As for your friend, with his fancy little theories... maybe he should put down the books for a second. Has he ever even logged onto the Internet before?

REACH OUT: http this:

- ◆ **The 50 Greatest Conspiracies of All Time** (<http://www.webcom.com/~conspire/>) Probably the most popular among the conspiracy links, this site provides limited, but amusing evidence against some of the greatest intrigues of all time.
- ◆ **Sovereign's WWW Content Page** (<http://www.primenet.com/~lion/index.html>) This site provides some of the most intelligent discourse on conspiracy theories and warns readers, "If you don't believe in something, you'll fall for anything."
- ◆ **World Wide Times** (<http://www.aloha.com/~k/ufo/>) They claim they have the "most complete collection of alien and related information available." Not quite, but a nice library of alien-rendered photographs and silly testimony.
- ◆ **New Dawn Conspiracy Site** (<http://omenil.omen.com.au/~mystical/newdawn.html>) New Dawn covers it all—from UFOs to political intrigue, to mind control. It's all about "alternative" news.
- ◆ **Illuminati Homepage** (<http://www-swiss.ai.mit.edu/~boogles/illuminati/>) Learn the Illuminati song, discover what a fford is, and read more than you care to about principia discordia. For hard-core Illuminati only. Others need not apply.
- ◆ **The X-Files Site** (<http://www.rutgers.edu/x-files.html>) There's an abundance of X-File sites, but this one holds some pretty cool stuff, including audio files of the show's theme music and promotional commercials, FAQs, information about X-File merchandise and an episode guide. The truth is in here.
- ◆ **The Fortean Times** (<http://alpha.mic.dundee.ac.uk/ft/>) This site's purpose is to study strange phenomena and experiences in an effort to continue the work of iconoclastic philosopher Charles Fort. This link offers much of the same: pictures, stories and more hogwash. See a dead alien being cosmetically brushed!
- ◆ **Soviet Archives Exhibit** (<http://sunsite.unc.edu/esp/soviet/exhibit/entrance.html>) Secret police, Chernobyl flaws and attacks on intelligentsia. Fun stuff.
- ◆ **And Don't forget to check out more at** <http://www.transfusion.com>

CURIOUS GEORGE

Dear FUSION,

Way to go with the Lucas story. I'm probably in the top 10 percent of *Star Wars* fans in the world (I have every action-figure imaginable) and am eagerly awaiting the re-release of the trilogy. If *Star Wars* does half as well in re-release as I think it should, it will top *Jurassic Park* and *E.T.* as the best-selling film of all time, a title it deserves.

Matt Silver
Detroit, MI



We're glad you like the piece, Matt. Listen, as fans of *Star Wars* ourselves, we were wondering if you had an extra Greedo you'd consider trading.

DIE-HARD FAN GUY

FUSION,

As a die-hard *Star Wars* fan I had to have the latest issue with its "George Lucas, the FUSION Interview." I really wish the interview had been longer. I know he's a hard guy to get in touch with, but the story is a little thin. Only three pages long? Next time, ask more questions about the next trilogy. That's what everyone really wants to know about.

Okay, having said that, I found the rest of the magazine entertaining. I like the fact that you cover a variety of subjects (like comics and movies). Most of us can afford the comics and movies, but the expensive computer stuff will have to wait a while. I only make so much money.

Also, what's the infatuation with Bill Gates? Am I not the only person who is completely sick to death of all the press that Windows 95 is getting? It seems like the computer industry has one star and we're all going to hear about him way too much. C'mon, there's got to be other people out there worthy of this attention.

Once again, I liked FUSION and will check in from time to time. Keep up the good work.

Thanks for hearing me out.

Marshall Beck
Needles, CA

PS. Did anyone ever notice that Bill Gates looks like a thinner version of director Michael Moore (also TV *Nation* creator)?



Poking Fun on the Internet

Waking out of his dorm room at Amherst College in Amherst, MA., wiseguy Josh Koppel publishes the highly underrated Internet comedy magazine, *Citizen Poke*. Over 30 to 40 pages fill the satirical publication, all downloadable at <http://www.amherst.edu/~poke/> or at unix.amherst.edu/pub/poke.

"By printing the magazine," explains Koppel, "the reader becomes the literal publisher. I encourage readers to reprint *Citizen Poke* till their heart's content. It's free distribution for the magazine."

At 19, having already written commercial scripts for advertiser Bayer, Best and Vanderwalker, and having authored numerous monologues for Chicago comedian Aaron Freeman, Koppel decided to take his irreverent style online to animate what he found to be a comedically dry environment. Over seven issues later, he's still providing the funniest material available on the Net.

All back issues of *Citizen Poke* are still available. This month, Koppel has a hysterical tribute to Jerry Garcia, a newly formatted Myers-Briggs Test, and all-new Trivial Pursuit cards, including the John Ritter Edition. Bust a gut.



"10 RATING...
DARK FORCES IS
THE GAME THAT DOOM II
SHOULD HAVE BEEN...
A MUST-OWN."

—COMPUTER PLAYER

"CONSUME YOU
IT WILL!" — YODA



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NO HOPE

Dear
FUSION,

My name is Dale Nee. In today's world much talk is heard of entertainment such as movies, TV shows, music, music videos and video games stirring up violent or lewd, immoral conduct. The fact is entertainment will not cause it, yet it does provoke immorality. It feeds the wrong ideas into children's minds that this is proper and acceptable. It tells youngsters violence, crime and corruption are ways to solve conflicts. Entertainment glorifies wicked acts, it encourages children to use weapons or to commit immoral sexual acts. TV and radio are bad babysitters. Youths are easily influenced by entertainment to engage in improper lifestyles. This is wrong! Crime, violence, war, murder, weapons, riots, assault, hatred, racism, fornication, drug and alcohol use, rob-



bery, carjacking, arson, fornication [Yes, this was written twice—Ed], adultery, teen pregnancies, vandalism, vehicular homicides are not acceptable or proper yet entertainment glorifies all these wicked things. Also, these sleazy talk shows do not help, they are filled with filth, trash and deception. Another form is the greedy, oppressive commercial system which promotes selfishness. Ease up, Hollywood!

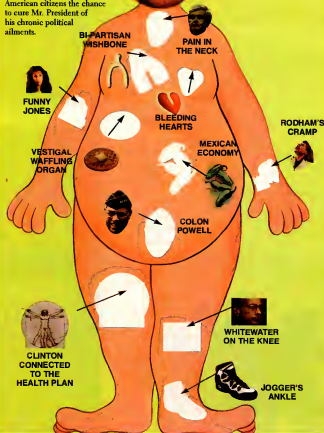
Dale R. Nee
Memphis, TN

Thanks for not mentioning
George Lucas, but...what?!

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OPERATION CLINTON

Taking full advantage of the inclement political climate, toy inventor Parker Galoob has re-invented one of the first and finest interactive board games of all time, *Operation*. Following on the heels of his extremely successful *Scraples for Congress*, Galoob's *Operation Clinton* (for ages 10 and up) gives up to four naturally born American citizens the chance to cure Mr. President of his chronic political ailments.





stories, Don. In fact, the next issue, (a very special *Enk Estrada* edition) has an estimated size of 20,000 pages for your reading pleasure. So start lifting, it's a big book.

FILM FLAM

Dear FUSION,

At times, it would be nice to have control over the fate of certain film characters—like the gape-faced Macanlay Calkin in *Home Alone* for example, so that he, and not Daniel Stern, suffers a lobotomy from a red-hot iron. Undoubtedly, such a change in the script's plot would have spared the world an even more galling sequel.

I thought about this exciting possibility while watching the overtyped Interfilm interactive feature *Mr. Payback* which I found to be a painful viewing experience. While I hate Calkin, I must say that I hate interactive films even more. Kids clambering over into empty seats to punch votes into vacant pistol grips, a film that lasts only about 20 minutes, annoying delays between scene changes. If there were a literary equivalent, it would be those wretched *Choose Your Own Adventure* books.

As it stands, interactive films are the lowest common denominator in moviemaking. Just my two bits. Where's the integrity in film-making today?

John Glavin
Austin, TX

Is that a rhetorical question or something, John?

OVER THE TOP

Dear FUSION,

I love what you guys have done with your magazine so far. It's definitely a step in the right direction as far as media magazines are concerned. I particularly enjoyed the Culture Shock section. It's incredibly dense and I was surprised at how much different ground you covered in the Lucas issue. Please tell Mo Ryan that I went on her recommendation and bought the latest *Flaming Lips* album. It's excellent. I also enjoyed the reference to the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Please add more music reviews—better yet—just more pages. The bigger the better.

Don Forde
San Francisco, CA

We will keep packing in the

FUSION

Thanks, everyone, for writing. We welcome your letters and e-mail and beer donations—the more the merrier. Send your mail to:

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FALLOUT

FUSION presents the first annual "Let it Bleed" Awards.

They are so commonplace in the gaming world that many players have become conditioned to trigger that "Start" button the instant they first appear on screen. Yet in the bloom of the 32-Bit era, we have seen some genuinely

though the actors typically perform in front of a greenscreen, with the set aliased in during postproduction. Computer animation employs advanced computer technology to animate three-dimensional rendered

matic understatement. Technically, this is the finest computer animation work since Chris Roberts pioneered the field in *Wing Commander 2* and *Strike Commander*. If this doesn't whet your appetite for a full-length, computer-animated feature film, nothing will.

Most Unnecessary Cut Scene(s)

—Road Rash 3DO remains perhaps the best combat racing game in history, but its silly FMV sequences serve merely to burst the game's bubble. Crude, foolish and totally ineffective.

Rookie of the Year

—Alan Kist, who directed the cut scenes for *Jumping Jack*

Best Acting in a Cut Scene

—Well, he'll never win an acting award anywhere else, but Sylvester Stallone was absolutely perfect in the 3DO version of *Demolition Man*. He had just the right balance of seriousness and self-parody and showed no stiffness whatsoever working in front of a greenscreen. (Honorable Mention to the plague victim in the Saturn version of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms IV: Wall of Fire*; I could really feel his pain.)

Worst Acting in a Cut Scene

—Electronic Arts' *Unnecessary*, in which somebody's girlfriend successfully delivers the worst monologue this side of an Ed Wood movie.

Software's *Grim War* for Sega and the Saturn. This innovative hybrid in the tradition of Robert Wever (*Voyeur*, *Thunder in Paradise*, etc.) shows great promise for the future.

Best Overall Use of Cut Scenes

—Tom Zito of Digital Pictures. Even in turkey's like *Corpse Killer*, DP's perfectly realized cut scenes beautifully establish the game's mood and motif.

Worst Overall Use of Cut Scenes

—Crystal Dynamics has spent more money to less effect than any other developer/publisher in the biz. In *Off-World Interceptor*, the company went so far as to actually dis its own footage!

compelling examples of the genre, including the first true masterpiece.

The subject is cut scenes, those non-interactive segments in games that serve as everything from the introduction to the backstory to an endgame reward. Cut scenes have actually been around for quite a few years, but the transition to CD-based formats has been a major boost to their evolution.

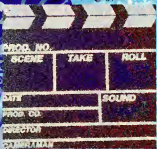
Cut scenes come in three flavors: full-motion video (FMV), computer animation and hybrids. FMV uses real actors and sometimes, actual sets,

while hybrid types use both technologies.

And now, in honor of the best and worst cut scenes the game business had to offer in 1995, I give you the first annual "Let it Bleed" Awards:

Year's Best Cut Scene

—Sega broke new ground with its stunning, almost wordless introduction to *Panzer Dragoon* on the Saturn. Even the most hardened game veterans have had their doors blown off by this masterpiece of cine-



the
front lines
of the
electronic
entertainment
revolution
can be a
dangerous place...



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- Oct. 14-15
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- Oct. 21-22
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* All titles, cities and dates are subject to change without notice.

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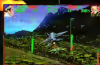
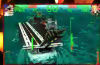
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